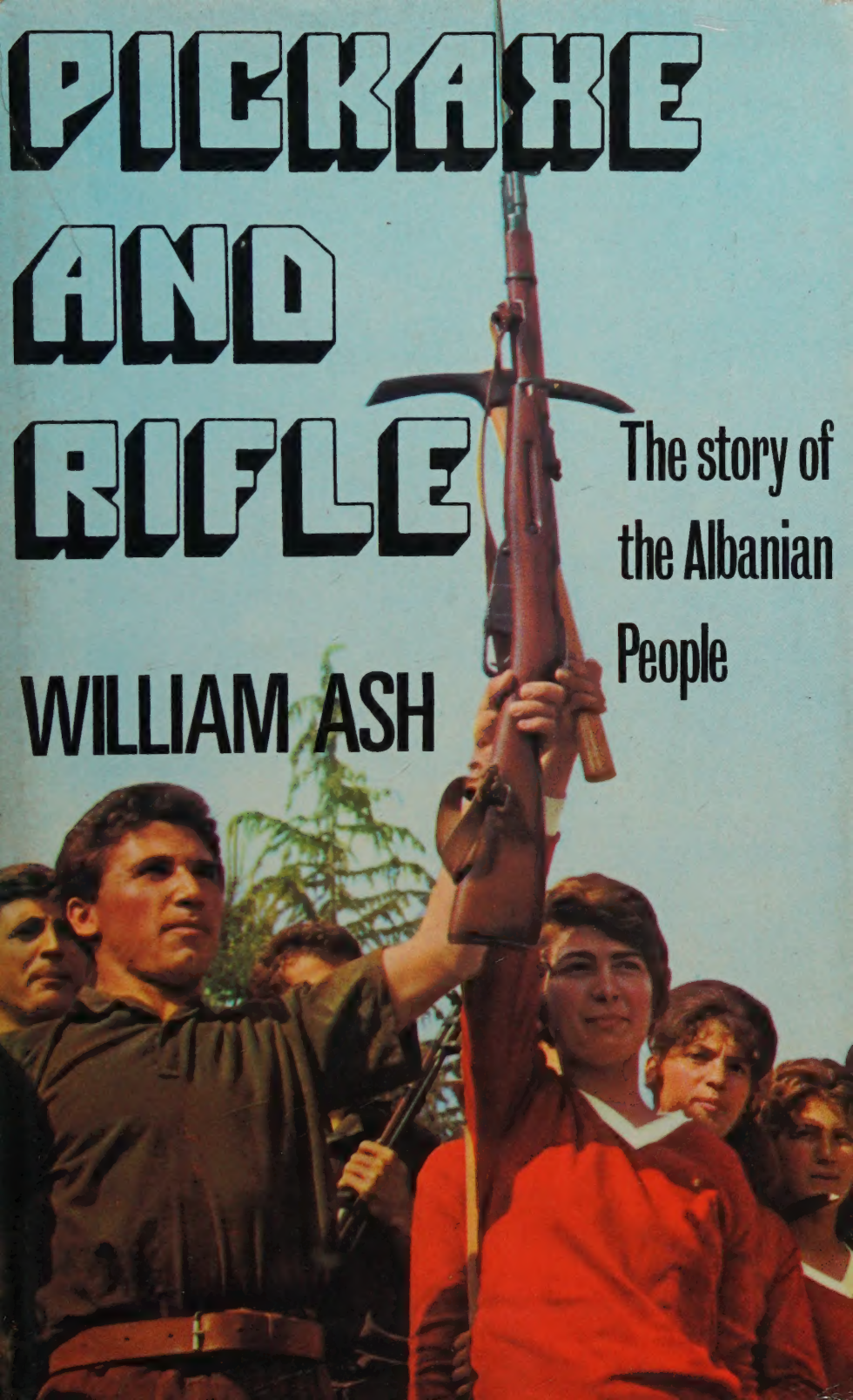
PICKAXE AND RIFLE

The story of the Albanian People

WILLIAM ASH



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And very sincere thanks to the people of Albania, of all ages and positions, who in answering my questions in such a frank and comradely spirit, supplied me with the information which has contributed to whatever understanding I have of socialism in practice.

William Ash

Albania's difference with the Soviet Union over the issue of the true nature of socialism, coupled with its fraternal alliance with People's China, has been at the very core of the split in the world communist movement.

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What are the characteristics of real socialist society as developed by the Albanians, and how have they guaranteed it against the distortions and deformations which have overtaken the other East European peoples' democracies?

And as a result, what is the quality of life in Albania today?

William Ash, author of MARXISM AND MORAL CONCEPTS, was invited to Albania in 1969 to tour the country extensively and to collect material for this book. Again, in 1971, the author had an opportunity of visiting Albania at the time of the Sixth Congress of the Party of Labour of Albania, and of checking the draft typescript of his work with historians, with State and Party leaders and, most important of all, with the people in the factories and on the collective farms.

The result is a most compelling account of real socialism in action.

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MARXISM AND MORAL CONCEPTS

PICKAXE AND RIFLE

William Ash

HOWARD BAKER
LONDON

William Ash
PICKAXE AND RIFLE

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PICKAXE AND RIFLE

(The revolutionary slogan of the Party of Labour of Albania: 'To build socialism holding a pickaxe in one hand and a rifle in the other.')

WHO ARE THE ALBANIANS

Chapter One:

From Illyria to the Turkish Conquest

It has been said of the Albanians that they have 'hacked their way through history, sword in hand'. This little country, somewhat larger than Wales, has been the scene of fierce wars of resistance from the very beginning of European history. These people, numbering till recently fewer than two million, have an unmatched record of struggle down the centuries to achieve their national integrity, to win and hold for themselves the right to develop their own resources, their own skills and talents without any interference from outside their own borders. The Albanians, descendants of the ancient Illyrians, are the oldest inhabitants of the Balkans going right back to the early Bronze Age; but it was only half way through the Twentieth Century that Enver Hoxha, who had led them in the liberation war against fascism, could at last say: 'The Albanian people will never again allow themselves to be trampled on as in the bitter past. They have their rights, dignity and honour; they have the right to live, to take their own decisions on any matter, just as any other people.'

The Albanians take their name from an old Illyrian tribe, the Albanoi, who inhabited the region from Durrës on the Adriatic coast to mountainous Dibra – the central portion of the present State of Albania. The Illyrians were an Indo-European people who in the great migrations from north to south Europe in the second millenium B.C. settled in the western Balkans. They had their own Illyrian language from which, though influenced by the speech of various invaders, modern Albanian is directly derived. Shkodra in northern Albania was the ancient capital of the Illyrian kingdom which was incorporated in the Roman Empire in 168 B.C. and supplied five Illyrians, including Diocletian, to rule as Roman emperors.

The culture of the Albanians has enriched itself from many

sources, Thracian, Greek, Roman, Slav, Byzantine and Islamic, without ever losing its identity. Their history is the account of their fight for survival. The development of their national character is intimately bound up with their rugged, scenically spectacular homeland which lay like a stumbling block across the old imperial routes of trade and conquest.

This abrupt dramatic land of lofty peaks dropping sheer into the sea, of deep valleys and bottomless lakes was in the path of the northward sweep of Greek colonisers; it lay across the main road, the Via Egnatia, which connected Rome with its eastern empire; it was overrun by Visigoths, Huns and slavs in their drive to the south; it blocked the invasion of western Europe by the Turks.

The resistance of the Illyrians to the Roman Empire contributed, together with the revolts of slaves and colonists and the invasion of barbarian tribes, to its final overthrow. The Illyrian uprising of the first few years of the Christian era, in which women fought side by side with their menfolk, was the most terrible, except for that against Carthage, of all the wars Rome waged abroad.

In mediaeval times there were successive revolts of the Arberesh, the Albanians, against Byzantine bondage. And in 1185 the Albanian feudal chiefs threw off the yoke of Byzantium and formed their first state, the principality of Arberia with Kruja as its capital. But none of the feudal dynasties, constantly warring with each other, was strong enough to unify the country; and the intervention of such mercantile states as Venice, eager to control the Albanian coast, was a further hindrance to centralisation.

During this time Albania did, however, achieve considerable economic progress. Arable land was extended and the cultivation of cereals, olive groves, vineyards and silk all flourished; there were big herds of sheep and cattle; and the increase of agricultural and dairy products made it possible to export part of each annual yield. In the revival of the cities of antiquity, as they became centres of artisan production enjoying a late middle ages prosperity, Dyrrachion thrived again as Durrës, Aulon as Vlora, Skodra as Shkodra and old Antipatria as the town known then and now as Berat.

This was the Albanian situation when the Ottoman Turks in

the middle of the Fourteenth Century bypassed Constantinople and spread over the Balkan peninsula. In the year 1389 a coalition of feudal rulers, Albanian, Serbian, Bulgarian, Rumanian and Hungarian, met the Turks in a bloody encounter on the plain of Kossovo and were completely crushed.

For some while a struggle over the succession of the Turkish throne held up all plans of conquest; but by 1421, under Sultan Murad II, the Janissaries and Spahis were on the march again, advancing on Hungary with the intention of battering their way into central Europe, and of reducing Albania to an obedient base for their attack on the rich Italian states.

The Albanian people led by their national hero George Kastrioti, known as Scanderbeg, repelled the Turkish forces for twenty-five years in a series of remarkable victories. At a time when the Ottomans were considered invincible, the Albanians successfully resisted more than twenty-two fierce campaigns to eliminate this stubborn salient. Sultan Murad II, who had never been defeated in thirty years of fighting, was routed before the walls of Kruja and his son Mehmet II, called Fatih, the Conqueror, because of his conquest of Constantinople, was also defeated utterly and repulsed.

The battles fought by the Albanian people under Scanderbeg's leadership echoed far beyond the country's frontiers and assumed international importance because in their courageous and skilful war to defend themselves they defended the whole of Europe for a quarter of a century, blunting and turning the edge of the massive invasion of the Turkish hordes. The Albanian resistance must therefore be recognised as one of the historical factors contributing to the independent development of European mercantilism which was a condition of the subsequent bourgeois revolution.

Scanderbeg was a great leader. He succeeded in breaking down feudal separatism and in the heat of battle fusing disparate social elements into a central government. He had the unique quality for his time of understanding how to rally about him the Albanian masses and of thus being able to give the war against the Turkish invaders the popular character of a people's liberation struggle. It is this which explains the

legendary epic enacted in the mountains, valleys, plains and castles of Albania by an embattled people when the rest of Europe was terror-stricken and prostrate before the Turkish advance.

In the military field he proved himself a great captain, a master of exploiting to the full the geographical peculiarities of Albania. He was also a shrewd diplomat who strengthened the position of Albania on the world scene by sagacious negotiation with a dozen different courts.

It is symbolic of the role the war against the Turks under Scanderbeg's leadership played in the development of the Albanian nation that the standard of the Kastrioti, a two-headed eagle on a red background, which Scanderbeg raised over the citadel of Kruja at the beginning of the struggle on November 28th, 1443, should be the national flag of Albania today. In order to understand the more recent history of Albania it is necessary to know something of the desperate resistance of the Albanian people, few in number, ill armed and without allies, against the vastly superior Turkish foe. Though the Turks finally conquered Albania – or what was left of it after a quarter of a century of being ceaselessly fought over, they never entirely subjugated the people who survived. The sense of a national identity grew so strong through the years of stubborn fighting that it endured through five hundred years of Turkish oppression, and the bitter struggle to preserve the Albanian language and customs and to prevent denationalisation never ceased.

It was of this fiercely independent temper of the Albanians, expressing itself in feudal forms of behaviour, that Byron wrote in the Second Canto (Stanza LXV) of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage:*

> 'Fierce are Albania's children, yet they lack
> Not virtues, were those virtues more mature.
> Where is the foe that ever saw their back?
> Who can so well the toil of war endure?
> Their native fastnesses not more secure
> Than they in doubtful time of troublous need:
> Their wrath how deadly! but their friendship sure,
> When Gratitude or Valour bids them bleed,
> Unshaken rushing on where'er their chief may lead.'

Chapter Two

Scanderbeg and the Growth of National Consciousness

George Kastrioti, born about the year 1405, was the youngest son of a nobleman from the north-eastern part of Albania whose family had managed to extend their holdings during the early years of the Turkish invasion. Whenever the Turkish grip weakened, the Kastrioti, like other feudal houses, sought to strengthen their position, often by contracting alliances with Venice or other principalities across the Adriatic. But when the Turkish rulers were able to re-impose their authority, these noblemen were forced back into vassalage.

It was as a vassal of Sultan Murad II that George's father, John, sent him to the Sultan's court at Adrianople as a youthful hostage. The Turkish chronicles describe the young man as 'sturdy, dexterous, comely and intelligent.' The son of a vassal ruler, he was trained at the military school near the palace; and on being converted to Mohammedanism he was given the name Skender. He was obliged to take part in the expeditions of the Turks in which he so distinguished himself as a soldier that he won the title of 'bey', thus coming to be called Scanderbeg.

Having won the confidence of the Sultan, he was appointed governor of the important district of Kruja including the fortified castle which was one of the most impregnable in Albania. Built high up on the rocky slopes of Mount Kruja the fortifications grow out of a huge mass of rock detached from the rest of the mountain rearing up behind. The unassailable front of this vast structure of thick walls and hidden passage ways, crowned with a citadel which still stands, points out over the northern coastal plain like the prow of a huge stone warship, commanding the country's most important port, Durrës, just visible in the distance

against the blue Adriatic and, indeed, the whole sweep of coastline right up to Albania's northern boundary, Kruja was the most strategically important of all the fortresses in central Albania, Petrela, Rodoni and others, whose signal fires at night could be seen from Kruja's high ramparts.

During Scanderbeg's many years at the Sultan's court and in the Turkish army he had never ceased to think of himself as Albanian nor lost his patriotic feeling for his homeland. Aspirations for the liberation of his country guided his thoughts and actions from the moment he took up his post in Kruja as subash. But in order to avoid, by long and careful preparation, the failure of past revolts, he kept his planning secret. He went quietly among the people to find out how ready the masses were to rise. He sought through his father's connections to discover what support there might be from abroad. When he was later transferred to the office of the governor of Dibra, some fifty miles to the east of Kruja on what is now the frontier with Yugoslavia, he was able to continue his preparations, assuring himself of popular support in this region, too.

For three years after being sent to Albania by the Sultan he worked in this underground way to make sure that when the revolt came it would break out with the most shattering force. Toward the end of 1443 he decided that conditions within the country were favourable for a massive uprising and at that time he was presented with the best possible external circumstances for launching a nation-wide insurrection.

Under the leadership of Janosh Hunyadi the Hungarians had been able to pass from defensive war against the Turks to offensive operations. In November 1443 the Hungarian army crossed the Danube and began an advance which threw the Turkish forces opposing them into panic. Scanderbeg was ordered by the Sultan to take his place in the army of the Dibra region and march to throw back the Hungarians. He gave every appearance of obeying this command; but during the confusion of the first encounter he suddenly pulled three hundred Albanian horsemen out of the battle to the dismay of the Turkish forces. At the head of this mounted troop, with his nephew, Hamza, riding beside him, Scanderbeg galloped back to Dibra where the whole population of the

town turned out to receive him with acclaim.

His first task was to clear the land of all occupying garrisons and in the whole system of fortifications enabling the Turks to maintain their grip on Albania the Castle of Kruja was the most formidable. Scanderbeg hurried there from Dibra and gained control of town and castle by the ruse of a forged paper announcing that the Sultan had re-appointed him to the governorship. During the night he opened the castle to his own soldiers who had hidden in a forest on the mountainside and they rushed through the fortress annihilating the Turkish garrison.

The capture of Kruja was the signal for a general revolt of the Albanians. Scanderbeg visited other regions spreading the flames of rebellion and returned to Kruja on November 28, 1443, when he hoisted the double-headed eagle banner over the battlements and proclaimed the re-establishment of the free Albanian principality.

Throughout the rest of that year Scanderbeg's force of Albanian volunteers occupied all the other citadels and strong-points in central Albania. But he realised that all the steps taken so far to secure the country would prove inadequate once the Turks had ended the threat of the Hungarian advance and could mass their forces for the reduction of Albanian resistance.

What was needed was an Albanian army under a unified command with the financial means of maintaining it. In the early part of the following year preparations were made for a convention of all the Albanian nobles who had shown any disposition to resist the Turks. This convention began its work on March 2, 1444, at Lezha, a town on the northern coastal plain which belonged to Venice and thus enabled the various feudal nobles to assemble there without misgivings about their own status. The free Albanian mountaineers were also represented at the meeting. Both Venice and Ragusa were invited to send delegations and since an anti-Turkish coalition in Albania was so much in their interests it was hoped that they would offer aid. But Ragusa failed to respond at all and Venice sent only an observer.

The convention confirmed an alliance known as the Albanian League with Scanderbeg as president. An Albanian

army made up of contingents recruited by each member of the League was established under the command of Scanderbeg who had promised the greatest number of troops. Each member also pledged a sum of money which became part of the common fund for arming and supporting a force of about 8,000 soldiers which with peasant volunteers mobilised in emergencies could be expanded to an army of 18,000.

The Albanian League was brought into being solely by the Turkish threat and the nobles who joined it kept their own domains, merely recognising Scanderbeg as first among equal feudal lords. But in spite of these limitations, the political and military alliance formed at Lezha represented a stage in the development of an Albanian national consciousness which was to have an importance extending far beyond the immediate needs of defence against the impending invasion. Moreover the League was not simply an agreement among nobles for holding on to their own possessions; it was an organisation in which the people themselves participated, not simply as dependents of this or that noble, but in their own right. The victories to be won and the advance in national awareness to be consolidated were achieved by the Albanian people under the political and military genius of Scanderbeg.

No army of mercenaries nor peasants forced to fight against their will could have proved a match for the Turkish Janissaries and Spahis. Scanderbeg spent the spring of 1444 personally going from village to village explaining the significance of the military mobilisation and recruiting the best men for the army. He inspected fortresses and strong-points, studying the ways by which they could be attacked, and he set up information posts among the people to warn of the approach of the Turkish vanguard on any part of the frontier.

There was not long to wait. In June 1444 an Ottoman army of 25,000 men under the command of Ali Pasha crossed the Albanian frontier at Dibra. Scanderbeg apparently engaged the invading army with his entire force and was thrown back; but this was merely a manoeuvre to lure the Ottoman troops deeper into the country. They pursued the retreating Albanians into the narrow valley of

Tervioli surrounded by thick forests and steep mountains and here, within the natural confines at the end of the valley, the Albanians turned on the Turks and annihilated the whole force.

Two other expeditions were sent by the Sultan against the Albanians, in 1445 and 1446, and both of them were crushed by the Albanian army.

But by then the Republic of Venice, alarmed at the growing strength and independence of the Albanian nobles under Scanderbeg's leadership, began to fear the loss of the cities on the Albanian coast to which it laid claim. When the lord of Dania died without heirs, the city should have passed under the authority of the Albanian League. A Venetian force occupied Dania and also took possession of the neighbouring coastal castles. Scanderbeg attacked at once, but without artillery it was difficult to dislodge the defenders. However, the Venetians failed to split the League which was their main object, and their offer of a princely reward to anyone who would kill Scanderbeg met with no success either.

The fighting against the Venetian occupation forces continued into the following year and was still pinning down a number of Albanians when, from the east, a huge Turkish army under the personal command of Sultan Murad II invaded the country in June 1448 and marched toward Kruja.

Scanderbeg was thus caught between two hostile forces. He undertook a series of lightning actions against the Venetians in the region of Shkodra and, with the aid of peasants in the area whom he roused to revolt, forced the Venetians into an open battle on the River Drin which resulted in a decisive victory for the Albanians.

Meanwhile the Turkish advance had been halted by the stubborn resistance of the Castle of Sfetigrad whose courageous garrison held out against massive assaults with siege engines right through the summer. By this time the Hungarians had launched a new campaign and the Sultan was forced to withdraw to Edrene in order to prepare for this attack. The two forces clashed in October and the Hungarians under Hunyadi were badly beaten; but the Albanians were

given additional time to consolidate their own defences.

Two years later the Sultan had amassed another force of more than 100,000 men for the final reduction of Albanian resistance. Word of this mighty army began to reach Scanderbeg as it approached the frontier. He called for a general mobilisation and within a few days expanded the army to some 18,000. He placed 1,500 men in the castle at Kruja against which the Sultan was advancing. He took personal command of 8,000 soldiers whom he held in the Gumenishti Mountains above Kruja. The rest of his forces he split up into small highly mobile bands.

From the moment the Turkish armies entered Albania, all along the valley of the Shkumbini River, they were harassed by these roving bands. Ambushes were set and sprung continuously; small detachments of the Turkish forces were separated and cut down; food trains were attacked and destroyed – classic guerrilla tactics in classic guerrilla country. By the time the Turks reached Kruja and deployed under the steep slope and solid battlements, they had already suffered heavy losses.

The Sultan ordered the bombardment of the citadel with artillery capable of hurling four hundred pound shells into the fortress. After this bombardment there was a general assault. While the Turkish forces were engaged with the castle garrison, Scanderbeg swept down from the heights with his best troops, striking first one flank of the Turks and then the other. The besieging army was thrown into a complete panic and the attack broke up in a disorderly rout.

During the summer two more major attacks against Kruja were launched and failed as miserably as the first. Nor had the guerrilla bands ceased their hit and run operations. The caravans that kept the Turkish invasion army supplied with provisions from Macedonia and Venice were repeatedly attacked. More and more peasants were recruited into these bands which not only cut off the Turks from necessary supplies, but kept nibbling away at their main forces. After four and a half months of military disasters Sultan Murad II retreated to Edrene leaving more than 20,000 dead under the walls of Kruja and in the valleys and forests through which his army passed.

This great victory not only strengthened Scanderbeg's position inside Albania. It resounded throughout Europe. Congratulations on his brilliant achievement were received from many European courts.

And Scanderbeg needed allies. There had been great military successes, but six years of war had ruined the country. The Turks, cheated of their expected victory, burned entire villages, drove peasants from the fields and destroyed crops. In the winter of 1450-51 there was a serious threat of famine. Scanderbeg approached those states with the most immediate interest in defeating the Turkish design of conquering Europe, but only the Kingdom of Naples responded at all and they offered very little actual help.

Inside Albania, too, there were those who were having second thoughts about the hard-won achievements on the field of battle. With the intensification of the war Scanderbeg had been forced to constrain the individualistic actions of the nobles who had bound themselves in the Albanian League. Willing enough to join in the mutual defence of their particular feudal interests they could not subscribe with any enthusiasm to a long uneven war in the interest of the whole country. Their selfish conduct made the mobilisation of resources in manpower and materials increasingly difficult. Their vacillation at critical moments was an ever-present danger behind Scanderbeg's back. The Turks and Venetians were quick to take advantage of this situation by trying to bribe or corrupt the nobles into betraying Scanderbeg and the defence of Albania.

He was thus left to depend as little as possible on the nobles and to rely more and more on the Albanian masses. The army, in so far as it was attached politically to him, who had no other concern but the country's freedom, began to have the characteristics of a national force.

When the interests of the war demanded, he ignored the status of nobles as autonomous rulers, violated the boundaries of local lords and made use as the need arose of their own castles for quartering troops. He even took coercive action against unreliable nobles and dismissed from office inefficient members of the aristocracy. The worst offenders against the common cause he deprived of lands which he gave

to peasants who had distinguished themselves in the fighting.

This growth in Scanderbeg's authority and the further erosion of feudal boundaries and privileges meant that Albania, at a very early period for such a development, was being fused by the flames of war into a single and united state.

And this in turn provoked even greater discontent among the nobles. Some, like the Arianits and Dukagjins, left the League altogether and began plotting with the Sultan against Scanderbeg. The treachery of Moisi Golemi, commander of the Albanian frontier forces, led to a defeat at the hands of the Turks near Berat. This reverse was remedied when a large force of Turkish cavalry with Moisi Golemi as their guide was surprised in the Dibra district and utterly annihilated. But the worst blow to Scanderbeg was the defection of his own nephew and earliest confederate, Hamza Kastrioti, with whom he had made the historic ride back into Albania as a declaration of war.

In the spring of 1457 the Sultan was sufficiently encouraged by the divisions in the ranks of the Albanian feudal chiefs to send an army 80,000 strong under the experienced general Isak bey Evrenos, against the Albanian people. As before, Scanderbeg succeeded in avoiding battle throughout the summer, harrying and retreating, feinting and withdrawing. Then in September, when the Turkish commander had become certain that these tactics indicated weakness in the enemy and the promise of an easy victory, his forces were caught off guard in the plain of Albulene, not far from Kruja, and thoroughly defeated. Among the thousands of prisoners taken was Hamza Kastrioti.

This tremendous victory again brought Scanderbeg congratulations from all over Europe. With the death of the Hungarian patriot, Janosh Hunyadi, Scanderbeg had become the most popular hero in the West and Europe's hope against the Turkish hordes. Pope Pius II sought to make Scanderbeg the pivotal figure in a crusade to be recruited from all Christendom; but as on previous occasions, professions of support were not backed by substantial help.

Scanderbeg entered into a three years' truce with the Turks, simply to gain time for preparing to renew the

liberation war. But the armistice was actually broken by Sultan Mehmet II, the Conqueror. He sent three expeditions against the Albanians in 1462 and all three were met, defeated and routed by Scanderbeg.

The Sultan then proposed not simply a truce but a ten years' treaty of peace which Scanderbeg signed. However, when it looked as though the long-discussed European crusade against the Turks was at last about to be launched, the truce agreement was broken. And then, once again, internal conflicts among the crusaders brought the venture to an end.

That left the Albanians under Scanderbeg, after twenty years of war which had destroyed the country's economy and largely depopulated it, facing on their own an enraged Sultan. An expedition commanded by Ballaban Pasha was immediately mounted and hurled against Albania. It was crushed – as were four successive expeditions. But when the Turks had been thrown back for the fifth time, the Albanians found themselves at the beginning of winter with no supplies of food.

Somehow famine was staved off; but then in the spring of 1466, before the grain stores could be filled, Sultan Fatih took command himself of an imperial army of 150,000. With Ballaban Pasha as his deputy-commander he set off at the head of this mighty force for a final showdown with this stubborn people who had for so long thwarted Turkish schemes of world conquest.

Just as fifteen years before, when another huge Turkish army under a Sultan's personal direction had invaded the country, the Albanians resorted to guerrilla tactics to weaken and delay the enemy. Just as fifteen years before, Kruja, besieged by the Sultan's forces and assailed by his engines, stood firm. During this period of stalemate Scanderbeg made a hasty visit to Rome where he appealed to the Consistory for help. In the streets he was hailed by the crowds as a great hero but he had to return to Albania without any promise of assistance. Collecting a force of battle-hardened veterans he mounted an attack on the army before Kruja and, just as fifteen years before, the Albanians won a brilliant victory. Ballaban Pasha was killed and the Sultan had to retreat with

the broken remnants of his once formidable army, still harassed by guerrilla bands.

Yet in July of 1467 Sultan Mehmet had once more amassed an army which he led in another assault on Albania. After a bloody battle near Elbasan the Sultan was convinced that Albanian resistance had been finally broken and marched on Kruja. But the garrison of the castle proved as indomitable as ever and the Sultan had to retreat.

The following year the Turks changed their tactics and invaded from the north instead of taking their usual route from Dibra along the Shkumbini valley. Scanderbeg at the head of the Albanian army moved north to meet them, but, falling ill, he was left at Lezha. The forces he had trained so well scored a splendid victory over the Turks near Shkodra. As so often in the past the Albanians had shattered the army sent against them; but at Lezha, on January 17th, 1468, their great leader Scanderbeg had died.

After his death the Albanian resistance continued for some years, indeed it never altogether ceased throughout the whole period of Turkish domination. Kruja did not surrender till 1478, ten years after Scanderbeg's death, and remains to this day a shrine of Albanian national struggle with the names of its heroic defenders like Count Urani, Tanush Thopia and so many others inscribed in the epic history of Albania's long fight for freedom. Above the town of Kruja, which was destroyed by the fascist invaders during the Second World War and has now been carefully restored, part of it just as it was in the past, there is a huge equestrian statue of Scanderbeg looking out to the sea over the plain below the fortress where so many of his battles against the Turks were fought and won.

Without Scanderbeg's inspiration and genius, which for twenty-five years had brought victory and international fame to the Albanian people, the struggle against the invading forces lost its drive. Not till the anti-fascist war of liberation was the same indomitable unity of the people under the leadership of a national hero to be achieved again, and this time the country's freedom, Scanderbeg's compelling vision, was to be finally secured.

THE GREAT LIBERATION WAR

Chapter Three
From the Turkish Conquest through the National Movement to the Italian Invasion

Resistance to the Turkish occupation and control of Albania never ceased and in certain parts of the country the military authority never succeeded in establishing more than a merely formal administrative system. The highlanders of the mountainous regions of Himara, Dukagjin and Dibra could not be subjected to the colonial feudalism imposed on the rest of the country and remained peasant free holders, governing themselves by their own traditional canons and acknowledging Turkish overlordship only by the payment of an annual tribute. Whenever the Ottoman empire was weakened by internal dissension or wars with European states, the highlanders were quick to take up arms in their unending struggle to free themselves from alien rule.

In the 17th Century the Turks undertook a forceful campaign of converting the Albanians to Islam hoping thereby to break their will to resist. Severe religious discrimination was practised and the fines and penalties for those who remained Christians became unbearable. But the conversion of the major part of the Albanians to Mohammedanism did not decrease the number nor the fierceness of the uprisings against the Turkish power.

During the 18th and 19th Centuries two great Albanian feudal chiefdoms achieved semi-autonomous rule – the aristocratic family of the Bushatlies in the north and Ali Pasha Tepelena in the south. A plaque on the remains of the great palace at Tepelena commemorates the visit of Lord Byron to the court of Ali Pasha which could be said to represent a renewal of western European interest in the romantic land of Scanderbeg. These feudal lords were unable to make common cause and unite the country for a national struggle, but they continued to exert pressure on the Turks

and at times succeeded in establishing themselves as independent rulers. In the large region of Janina Ali Pasha's great feudal estates were held at the expense of the military feudal government of Istambul and he depended for support on the Albanian population, both the ruling class and the armed forces of his domain being constituted entirely of Albanians.

When about 1830 the Turks began to replace the feudal military government with a more modern state administration, there were a series of armed revolts of peasants led by local chieftains. Further attempts to centralise power in Albania by the reforms of Tanzimat had the support of those landlords whose position would be strengthened as the old military feudal order was abolished. But the highland chieftains in particular and the peasants generally were bitterly opposed to these new forms of subjugation and rebellions broke out all over the country culminating in the great insurrection of 1847.

At the same time as the uprising against the Tanzimat, various personalities were emerging in Albania who felt that the country could not be saved by re-establishing a backward, feudal even though independent Albania and that the only hope lay along the road of the advanced European states. This national movement found its voice at the Conference of Prizren in 1878 which was called to meet the threat of Albania's dismemberment by the European powers at the Congress of Berlin. Out of the Conference grew the organisation of the League of Prizren which was split between those who wanted to make it a predominantly Muslim body still depending on Turkey to defend Albania's integrity from other imperialist powers, and those patriots led by Abdul Frasheri who demanded that the League should assume a purely Albanian character, irrespective of religion, and fight not only to save Albania from partition but to secure its complete autonomy as well.

It was the latter line of national resurgence which grew in strength leading to the revolts of 1910 and 1911 and then to the general uprising of 1912 when Albania gained its independence after nearly half a millennium of oppressive Turkish rule. But in the general division of the spoils at the end of the First World War, Britain, France and the United

States, who had acquired a self-assumed right to interfere in Albania's affairs by the decision of the Conference of Ambassadors held in London in 1913, agreed to pay off their junior partners in the conflict against the Central Powers by carving up Albania and handing out the pieces.

In their Memorandum of December 9, 1919, Italy was allowed to annex outright the district of Vlora and the island of Sazan and was given a mandate over the rest of the country. The old city of Gjirokastra in the south was ceded to Greece and Korça, the major city in the southeast, was to remain in political limbo till its future could be decided. The northern boundary was left intact; but the newly-created Yugoslavia was granted the right to construct a railway across Albania to the Adriatic.

By this Memorandum of the Great Powers Albania would have escaped the clutches of Turkey only to become the prey of the Western imperialist countries. At a Congress summoned by Albanian patriots on January 21, 1920, these decisions were firmly rejected and the government which had been prepared to accept the proposed partition and occupation of the country was dismissed.

A popular uprising against the Italian forces in the Vlora district was so successful that Rome had to agree to withdraw its troops by September of that year. With the failure to impose against the will of the Albanian people the main provision of the Great Power Memorandum the other recommendations were also abandoned. A sovereign Albania, with its frontiers as established in 1913, applied for membership of the League of Nations and was accepted by a resolution of the General Assembly in December, 1920.

But this by no means ended either the internal dissensions within this most economically backward of European countries, nor the external designs against its sovereignty by its immediate neighbours. A progressive government under the patriot, Fan Noli, came to power with popular support in June, 1924; but in spite of various liberal measures enacted it failed to consolidate its position with the masses or to make adequate military preparations against reactionary forces which had the backing of foreign powers bent on intervention.

At the end of the year Ahmed Zog, who had taken refuge in Yugoslavia when the anti-feudal, reform government assumed office, crossed the frontier into Albania with a force of mercenaries including troops from General Wrangel's White Russian Army then quartered in Yugoslavia. The backing of foreign firms, like the British Anglo-Persian Oil Company, supplied funds in exchange for the promise of oil concessions. Zog also raised a mercenary force in Greece which invaded Albania simultaneously from the south. With the support of the big feudal landlords inside the country, Zog was able to overthrow the government and establish his reactionary regime throughout the country.

His rule depended on the suppression, often by assassination, of patriots and the opening of the country to exploitation by foreign companies, mainly Italian. By 1928, the year in which he had himself proclaimed King of Albania, a quarter of the country was let out in concessions to Italian, British and American corporations which discovered and developed for their own profit the oil and mineral wealth of Albania.

A loan of 70 million gold francs was raised from the Italian Company for the Economic Development of Albania on the security of the revenues from customs duties and the Albanian state monopolies. This loan was subsequently converted by Mussolini into a debt to the fascist imperial state; and the failure to pay the instalments was used by Mussolini to exact further concessions, such as customs agreements between the two countries, opening Albania even wider to the penetration of Italian goods and eliminating Albanian producers.

So desperate was the economic plight of Albania by 1936 that Zog had to sign a new economic agreement with Rome in exchange for credits. A secret proviso of this agreement placed the Albanian army under control of the Italian government and required Albania to construct under Italian direction strategic roads leading to the Yugoslav border.

Thus at the time of the reconquest of the Rhineland by Nazi Germany and Franco's fascist insurrection in Spain, when Mussolini's government had launched an unprovoked war of aggression against Ethiopia, the way was also prepared

for the fascist occupation of Albania. Indeed Count Ciano, Italy's Minister of Foreign Affairs, on his return from a visit to Tirana at the time of King Zog's marriage in 1938, set out a concrete plan for the conquest of Albania which involved excluding Albania from the League of Nations, destroying the Albanian army's capacity for resistance through the Italian officers serving in it, developing by means of subsidies a fifth column and spreading throughout Albania fascist and pro-fascist institutions of a social and cultural nature.

By March 1939 world conditions seemed favourable for Mussolini's invasion of Albania. Czechoslovakia had been occupied by Nazi Germany without any resistance from the Western Powers. Fascist forces supported by Germany and Italy were on the verge of victory in Spain. In Yugoslavia the government which had opposed Italy's conquest of Albania suddenly resigned.

On March 25th, having massed invasion forces in the southern Italian ports opposite Albania, Mussolini delivered a projected treaty to Zog's government in the form of an ultimatum. By the terms of this treaty Italian troops should be permitted to land in Albania's principal ports and take control of roads, aerodromes and strategic points along the frontier; Italian farmers should be settled on Albanian land and enjoy full rights of citizenship; Italian citizens residing in Albania should be entitled to hold the most important official posts and the general secretaries of the government ministries should all be Italian citizens. An answer to these non-negotiable proposals was demanded before midnight of April 6th. Counter proposals from Tirana were simply ignored.

Zog, whose policies of internal repression and external capitulation had brought about Albania's disastrous situation, quickly collected whatever he could lay his hands on and abandoned the country.

Albania had barely begun to emerge from its backward feudal state as a former Turkish colony when the whole weight of Italian and then German fascism threatened to crush the life out of it. Over four-fifths of the population were illiterate; one out of every two babies died in the first year. Apart from the extraction of raw materials by foreign

firms there was no industry, only handicrafts; and the entire labour force totalled fewer than 15,000 workers. Of the foreign-trained graduates there were perhaps eighty engineers, economists and agricultural specialists in the whole country. Such was Albania on the eve of five years of enemy occupation which in terms of armed might and savage barbarity were unequalled by anything even the Albanians had ever experienced before.

* * *

The Italian Invasion

At dawn on Good Friday, April 7, 1939, an Italian invasion force of 40,000, aboard a fleet of troop transports escorted by hundreds of fighter planes, was approaching the four principal ports of Albania – Shengjin, Durrës, Vlora and Saranda.

The supreme commander of this aggressive operation, General Guzzoni, could have expected little active resistance from the Albanians. Their army had long been virtually under Italian control; fascist agents had been free to carry out acts of sabotage and disruption; collaborators within Zog's government had done their best to demoralise the people and destroy any will to fight back. As the troop ships drew near, it was discovered that the few artillery pieces had been rendered ineffective, ammunition for rifles and machine guns had suddenly disappeared and the army was thrown into a state of complete confusion by conflicting orders.

Even so, a number of individual volunteers and regular soldiers managed somehow to acquire arms and offer resistance. In Durrës the Italian troops who had landed were so hotly engaged they were forced to board their transports again. Warships directed a heavy bombardment against the town and another landing was attempted. Three times troops tried to seize Durrës by assault and three times they were driven back to their ships. An Albanian sailor, Mujo Ulqinaku, who fell at a street intersection while heroically holding off an attacking column became the symbol for this spontaneous and unorganised resistance.

But the enemies of Albanian independence within and

without had prepared the way too well for individual acts of heroism to stem the Italian advance. Tirana was taken on April 8th, Shkodra and Gjirokastra on April 9th; and by April 10th almost the entire country had been conquered by the fascist forces.

This act of aggression evoked no protest to speak of on the part of the Western powers nor of Albania's Balkan neighbours. In the House of Commons on April 13, the British Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, presented Italian and Albanian versions of the invasion and stated that the Italian government's action had 'cast a shadow over the genuineness of their intentions to carry out their undertakings' not to alter the status quo in the Mediterranean. But unless Greece or Rumania should be involved, it was felt that there were insufficient grounds for ending the Anglo-Italian Agreement signed a year before.

Mussolini did not, of course, admit that military occupation of Albania amounted to forceful annexation of the country: he described it as insuring the 'independence' of Albania, threatened by other powers, through the 'personal union' of the Kingdom of Albania and the Kingdom of Italy under the crown of the King-Emperor Victor Emmanuel III. To try to maintain this political fiction a 'constituent assembly' of those who had been in touch with the Italian legation in Tirana before the occupation and representatives of landlords, chieftains and business men sympathetic to fascism was hastily called to proclaim the act of union. An 'Albanian Government' under the presidency of one of the biggest landlords, Shefqet bey Verlaci, was established by the invaders; and prompted by the King-Emperor's special lieutenant, Francesco Jacomoni, this puppet government promulgated a whole series of political and economic conventions.

By these conventions Albania and Italy were to be one single land subject to all the tariff and customs regulations of Italy, with the Albanian franc tied to the Italian lira. Italian citizens in Albania were to enjoy all the civil and political rights of Albanians. Albania was to have no parliament, the legislative as well as the executive power being reserved to the King of Italy and Albania and Emperor of Ethiopia in the person of his

lieutenant. The international relations of Italy and Albania were to be united and concentrated in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Rome. And the Albanian army was to be suppressed as an independent force and become part of the Italian army.

Close on the heels of the military occupiers came special agents from Rome to set up an Albanian Fascist Party with all its subsidiary organisations for youth, for children, for women and for workers. There was no popular response to this move; but employees were coerced into enrolling themselves and their families in the respective fascist organisations and had to submit to the attempt at indoctrinating them with fascist ideology.

These steps having been taken for the complete colonisation of Albania, tens of thousands of Italians poured into the country – workers, farmers, teachers, technicians, merchants, industrialists and, of course, state officials. In agriculture Mussolini's 'reforms' for Albania included draining the lands near the coast and settling thousands of Italian farmers there while the Albanian peasants were driven from these areas up into the stony highlands. By 1940 there were more Italian workers in the country than Albanian. In schools and in the administration the Italian language was imposed and the whole culture of the country was subjected to the process of complete Italianisation.

Swarms of Italian monopolists moved into Albania to exploit the country's natural resources and profit from cheap labour. Within the first year there were nearly 140 Italian capitalist enterprises developing mineral wealth to feed the war economy of fascist Italy and constructing military bases and strategic roads connecting the coast with the border regions to further Italy's aggressive intentions in the Balkans. Two powerful banks, the Banco di Napoli and the Banco del Lavoro, together with the Italian capitalised National Bank of Albania, covered the country with a financial network controlling all economic life.

The National Bank of Albania, which had followed a severe policy of deflation up to the Italian invasion, switched to a policy of ruinous inflation and in two years the amount of francs in circulation rose from some 10 million to over 140 million.

Albania was thus quickly turned into a source of raw materials for Italy and a safe market for Italian goods – the classic condition of any colony. The few native industries were forced out of business and craftsmen were reduced to absolute want. The working conditions of Albanian labourers, enjoying none of the advantages of Italian immigrant workers, were deplorable. The fascist policy of ruthlessly exploiting the countryside to secure foodstuffs for Italian cities and the expanding army of occupation brought the Albanian peasantry to a miserable state. Only the upper ranks of the Albanian merchant class which entered into joint speculation with Italian capitalists benefited from the complete absorption of Albania into Italy's fascist economy.

Chapter Four

Beginnings of Albanian National Resistance

Throughout this period of Italian conquest and the attempt to consolidate fascist rule in Albania, there was resistance by the people, at first of a spontaneous and sporadic nature. Even before the actual invasion a communist-led anti-fascist demonstration in Tirana on April 3, 1939, sparked off protest demonstrations all over the country.

In June, two months after the invasion, the workers of the Vlora dockyards went on strike against the oppressive conditions imposed on them and held up the unloading of arms and supplies for the occupying troops. Carabinieri had to be used to break up the workers' resistance. In the Italian enterprises particularly strikes and acts of sabotage by Albanian workers were common.

The obligatory enrolment of Albanians in the various fascist organisations was defied from the start. Workers and employees refused to accept membership, tore down the fascist party posters, chalked up their own liberation slogans everywhere. Even children took part in the wave of popular resentment, like the students of the lycée in Shkodra who clashed with the local militia in the course of an anti-fascist rally, or those of the Korça lycée who marched out of school in a body rather than give the fascist salute. Peasants too were involved in this general if, as yet, unorganised resistance and in the Muzeqe district acted together to prevent the measurement of their fields for the purpose of re-allocation.

The nation-wide demonstrations on Flag Day, November 28, 1939, brought tens of thousands of Albanians out into the streets of the principal cities, marching under the national flag, shouting anti-fascist slogans and skirmishing with the

police and carabinieri. So powerful had the mass movement of strikes and political demonstrations grown by April, 1940, just one year after the Italian landing, that the fascist authorities banned all forms of rallies, processions and meetings, and imposed the death penalty on anyone defying the ban.

Quite apart from the Italian forces introduced into Albania for launching further acts of aggression in the Balkans, more and more troops were required simply to suppress continued Albanian resistance. In addition to the IXth Army Corps, special detachments of the airforce and navy, fascist militia, carabinieri and border guards were landed, making up an occupation force of more than 100,000.

To the thousand Albanians of known patriotic sentiments who were rounded up immediately after the invasion and sent to Italian gaols and concentration camps, more were added every month as arrests were made by the network of police spies and collaborators covering the country. The possession of fire-arms, a strong tradition among the self-reliant Albanians, especially in the mountainous regions, was also subject to sentence of death. Moving about at night, listening to foreign broadcasts, showing contempt for fascist officials – all became matters of severe punishment including summary execution.

Most of the demonstrations, protest movements and various forms of political and industrial resistance were led by the communists. The communist movement had grown throughout the 'thirties in spite of Zog's repressive measures and it was the only political organisation in the country which was untainted by any form of collaboration. However, the communists at this time did not represent a united political force capable of leading a national liberation movement in a protracted struggle against fascism. There were, apart from individuals sympathetic to communist ideas, three main groups, two of them based in Korça and Shkodra which were in conflict with each other on questions of both policy and organisation and a third, the 'youth' group strongly influenced by Trotskyite and anarchist views.

But in spite of these weaknesses, the communist-led resistance during the first half of 1940 took more active

forms, passing over to concerted sabotage of Italian military installations. With Italy's entry into the Second World War on the side of Nazi Germany in June, 1940, the Albanian resistance became part of the world anti-fascist struggle.

In October the Italian fascists, using conquered Albania as a base, invaded Greece. Included with this aggressive force were two battalions of Albanians who had been impressed into the Italian army. Just as so many years before the Albanian troop of horse sent by the Turkish Sultan against the Hungarians had been pulled out of the battle by Scanderbeg, so these Albanians, forced to join the Italian expedition against the Greeks, refused to fire on Greek soldiers and deserted from the ranks. Avoiding capture they made their way back to Albania and took to the mountains, joining the armed bands of the liberation movement. With other Albanian patriots they supported the Greek people by attacking the Italian lines of communication and disrupting the rear of the invasion army.

The Italian fascists and their collaborators tried to present the aggressive war in the Balkans as an opportunity for Albania to recover the territories lost to Yugoslavia and Greece. Zog's representative in the United States, Faik Konitza, said in a statement to the American press: 'Italy is prepared to intervene in order to rectify the injustices that have been inflicted on the Albanian nation and to re-establish the natural and historical boundaries of Albania'. This propaganda failed to make any impression at all on the Albanian people who could scarcely be deceived into regarding their fascist oppressors as liberators of their country. They increased their efforts to turn Albania into a very insecure base for the Italian conquest of neighbouring states.

Mussolini suffered a humiliating defeat at the hands of the Greeks and in a letter to Hitler in November, 1940, he attributed the failure of his invasion to insufficient military preparation and to the 'unforeseen treason of the Albanians who had turned their guns against the Italians'.

In pursuit of the retreating Italians, Greek troops entered Albania, capturing Korça in November, 1940, and Gjirokastra in December. Albanian patriots, led by the Korça communist

group, immediately requested permission to join the Greek forces under their own national flag forming a common anti-fascist front. The Greek commander rejected this proposal and set about establishing Greek civil administration in the 'liberated' portions of Albania, arresting those Albanians who protested against this attempted annexation. The heroic defeat of the Italians was marred by this opportunistic exercise of Greek chauvinism and the possibility of uniting against the common enemy was thrown away.

In the spring of 1941 the military situation in the Balkans was abruptly transformed by German surprise attacks against Yugoslavia and Greece. The Nazi aggression begun on April 6, 1941, quickly shattered open resistance in both countries and within two weeks the Yugoslav and Greek armies had capitulated, thus enabling the Italians to expel the Greek forces still in Albania and regain their grip on the whole country.

That summer, on June 22, 1941, the Nazis launched their attack on the Soviet Union. In spite of early German successes, this had the effect of enormously broadening the anti-fascist war front and creating the prospect of the eventual defeat of the Axis Powers. It raised the Albanians' hope of liberating their own country and offered the possibility of a friendly alliance with the Soviet Union as a check to the ambitions against Albanian sovereignty of the Yugoslav and Greek exile governments in London.

The fierce resistance of the Soviet people to Nazi aggression and the beginnings of the massive effort to shatter and hurl back the German invaders gave a new impulse to the Albanian communists. During the summer and autumn of 1941 they were more active than ever in spreading armed struggle to various parts of the country. The Korça communist group in particular issued a series of appeals for a war of liberation and in the mountainous regions began to organise and arm fugitive patriots like those led by Myslim Peza. Along with the formation of guerrilla bands went the effort to eliminate the differences among the various communist groups and unite them into a single revolutionary Marxist-Leninist party capable of leading the national struggle.

In this effort to establish an Albanian Communist Party, a tall, handsome, young man, only 31 at the time, but already politically matured by revolutionary experiences, soon demonstrated by his correct assessment of the situation and his courage in acting on it, the qualities which were to make him the great popular leader of the country's grim struggle to free itself and then to consolidate that freedom after the war.

Enver Hoxha was born in southern Albania, on October 16, 1908, in Gjirokastra, a romantic old city on the lower slopes of the Mali i Gjërë, which clusters about a majestic fortress looking out over the valley of the Vjosa. It was also the birthplace of the brothers, Bajo and Çerçiz Topulli, who played a heroic part in defeating the Ottoman troops and liberating Albania from Turkish rule. After finishing secondary school in Korça and coming into contact with the communists there, Enver Hoxha spent six years studying and working in France and Belgium. He contributed articles denouncing Zog's regime in Albania to the French Communist press and, subsequently, Zog's agents abroad got him dismissed from a post in the Albanian Consulate in Brussels. He returned home in 1936, a convinced communist, and pledged at the grave of Bajo Topulli that he and all young Albanians would fight for a free and unified country. He taught for a time at the state lycée in Tirana and then at the lycée in Korça where he played an active part in the communist group. Sacked in 1939 by the collaborationist administration, he went to Tirana where he was charged with the responsibility of organising the anti-fascist movement in the capital and surrounding districts.

His position as organiser of the Tirana branch of the Korça group was useful in bringing about the unity of the communist movement which was the only force potentially qualified to lead the liberation struggle. He made contact with two young activists of the Shkodra group, Qemal Stafa and Vasil Shanto, who shared his views and were prepared to work with him in the task of pulling the movement together. This was very necessary because Trotskyists and anarchists were characteristically spreading such absurd ideas among the youth as the impossibility of forming a communist party at all since there was no working class to speak of and the

peasants were hopelessly reactionary, or the possibility of merging with fascist organisations in order to fight the enemy from within by conspiratorial means.

Even the leaders of the communist factions were incapable of seeing the mistake of calling for unity on the basis of a federation of existing groups. What Enver Hoxha correctly demanded was their complete fusion into one party with the utter elimination of any special features which had once distinguished them. He realised that this fusion of Albanian communists into a single revolutionary party could not be achieved simply by the groups agreeing to shed their distorted views, nor even by the general acceptance in the abstract of a Marxist-Leninist programme, but principally by common revolutionary action against the fascist enemy which would do more than any amount of theoretical discussion to weld all professing communists into a unified, fraternal force.

In applying this understanding Enver Hoxha personally led a great patriotic demonstration at Tirana in front of the office of the quisling prime minister on October 28, 1941. The communists were involved in fiercely-contested street battles with the Italian police and the need to fight and defend each other without regard to who belonged to what group was the best possible preparation for the convention of communists called for the first week in November. As a result of the demonstration a sentence of death was passed on Enver Hoxha 'in absentia' by the fascist authorities. A big rally in Korça on November 8, the opening day of the meeting of communist groups, also led to a bloody encounter with police and carabinieri in which Koçi Bako, a veteran member of the Korça group, was killed and many of the demonstrators were seriously wounded.

The meeting held in Tirana under the closest security arrangements from the 8th to the 14th was attended by 15 communists including Enver Hoxha, Qemal Stafa, Vasil Shanto and Pilo Peristeri. Right at the start the decision was taken to disband the three groups and form the Albanian Communist Party on the basis of Marxism-Leninism. To help make sure that the old groupings did not survive it was agreed that none of the former factional leaders would have a place

on the Provisional Central Committee, which was elected with Enver Hoxha at its head. A new programme in the form of a resolution was approved.

This resolution set forth the political tasks of the Albanian Communist Party as the mobilisation of the popular masses of Albania in the armed struggle against the fascist invaders and their collaborators for the national independence of the country, in co-operation with all nationalist, patriotic forces, in militant friendship with the people of the Balkans, particularly with the peoples of Yugoslavia and Greece, and in alliance with the anti-fascist coalition, mainly the Soviet Union. It was explained that the mobilisation of the masses, the workers and peasants, had the aim not only of liberating Albania, but after independence was won of ending the rule of business men and landlords and establishing popular democratic rule.

A manifesto issued for secret distribution by the Provisional Central Committee called on the masses to begin the general war of liberation. The people should not pay taxes, deliver corn nor give so much as a glass of water to the enemy occupiers. They should join, arms in hand, the ranks of the freedom fighters. This same manifesto addressing itself to communists urged them to display revolutionary zeal in all circumstances – a spirit of self-sacrifice, initiative and organisational ability. They must stand always in the forefront of struggle, occupy always the advanced posts in the fighting, be always where the danger was greatest and give without hesitation even their lives for the country's liberation.

The leading role of the Communist Party in the national struggle was founded entirely on the examples of courageous devotion of individual communists. Communists were the main target of the savage repression of the Italian fascists. The collaborationist government under Shefqet Verlaci and, when the situation demanded even more brutal measures, under Mustafa Kruja, also directed the full force of its military, police and propaganda machine against the communists – trying to split the resistance front by detaching non-communist elements from Party leadership in order to isolate the main enemy of the Italian occupation. But the people soon realised that the communists never

called for military initiative and personal risks which they were not already taking themselves in the fullest measure.

On November 23, a few weeks after the formation of the Party, the underground organisation of Albanian Communist Youth was created in Tirana with Qemal Stafa as its political secretary. In that same month a guerrilla unit carrying out an assault on a fascist command post in Tirana was involved in a running gun battle with the collaborationist police and killed the chief of that reactionary force.

The passing over from spontaneous resistance to an organised liberation war, which after years of hardship and sacrifice was to free Albania from the armed might of both Italy and Germany without the help of any other power, must be dated from the foundation of the Albanian Communist Party which was to provide the leadership for every stage of the struggle.

Chapter Five

The Development of People's War

Throughout 1942 the Albanian Communist Party continued to mobilise the people for what had become a full-scale anti-fascist war. By the middle of the year partisan units covered almost the whole country, carrying out frequent attacks against Italian transport columns and co-ordinating their actions with guerrilla operations inside the cities. During the single night of July 24th, guerrilla units from one end of Albania to the other knocked down telephone posts, cut wires and cables and blacked out the entire communication system, throwing the Italians into a state of panic.

In Tirana, guerrilla units burned down the telephone office, seized the archives of the ministry of the interior, including the dossiers kept there of all those suspected of working with the resistance, blew up the warehouses of the military engineering department and destroyed military installations on the airfield. In Korça the headquarters of the fascist party was set on fire. In Shkodra the political prison was stormed and those detained were freed to join the partisans.

Individual communists, who in fulfilling their party tasks preferred to die than to fall into the hands of the fascist police or the militia of Mustafa Kruja, won the admiration of the whole country.

Qemal Stafa, secretary of the recently-formed Albanian Communist Youth Movement and himself only 22, became involved on his own in a running fight with a whole company of militia. He was hunted from one section of Tirana to another till at last, besieged in a house which was completely surrounded, he charged out with only a pistol and was finally brought down.

The head of the Tirana guerrilla units, Vojo Kushi, with two comrades was cut off by 500 carabinieri and police in a small house in the Kodra Kuqe quarter. The battle went on for six hours and then tanks were brought up to dislodge the young men. Vojo Kushi stormed out breaking through the first and second rings of besiegers and killing a number of fascists. He climbed up on one of the tanks and had pried open the cover to take it over when he died under a fussillade of bullets.

In Shkodra three students, Perlat Rexhepi, Branko Kadia and Jordan Misja were also surrounded by a large force of fascist troops and police. They fought off attacks for many hours and then, when their ammunition was almost exhausted, rushed out of the house firing as they went and killed many of the enemy before they themselves died fighting.

Midhi Kostani and Kiço Greço were captured and subjected to the most brutal tortures to make them reveal information about the guerrillas. Both of them died in agony without telling the enemy anything.

Such acts of courage could not but arouse enthusiasm among the people who learned of such things from secret tracts and bulletins which circulated everywhere. The first mimeographed issue of the paper of the Albanian Communist Party, Zeri i Popullit (People's Voice), came out in August, 1942, and became the main source of information about the course of the war and the theory and practice of people's struggle. The leading article of the first number called for the unity of all Albanians. 'All honest, anti-fascist people, regardless of their religious beliefs or political opinions, must unite around this organ for an independent, free and democratic Albania.'

The creation of a broad liberation front depended on the response of the peasants. They hated the Italians and their collaborators and they were prepared to fight. Particularly those in the mountainous regions had a strong tradition of armed defence of their own households. But at first they did not wish to join actual guerrilla formations nor accept the leadership of the Communist Party. Party recruiting agents who came to the villages to try to win peasants over to a

more active and organised role in the struggle were likely to be mocked and accused of being tyros in the art of war.

However, the peasants soon became convinced that the Party-led National Liberation Front was not only capable of taking on the enemy, but of bringing about the social emancipation of the country as well. They were attracted by the prospect of lands being turned over to them at the conclusion of a war which was to change social conditions in Albania as well as free it from external enemies. Once they began to co-operate more closely with the fighting units the quality of leadership removed their suspicions of the Party.

And just as peasants were taking arms and joining the partisan bands, so workers, artisans, students and employees were fleeing from the cities and enlisting in the resistance struggle. It was in the partisan bands, in the heat of battle, that the alliance of the working class and the peasantry was forged.

On September 16, 1942, a National Liberation Conference was convened at Peza which had been liberated by the partisans even though it was only fourteen miles from Tirana. Those attending included not only communists but well-known personalities who had come close to the Party in the course of being engaged in the anti-fascist struggle on their own; patriots like Myslim Peza, a kind of Albanian Robin Hood who for ten years had been an outlaw under the Zogist régime. It also included those who were outspokenly anti-communist and had not so far been engaged in the fighting, as long as they declared themselves in sympathy with the national struggle. Such was Abaz Kupi, a supporter of the former King Zog, whom the British had smuggled back into Albania the year before. There were even those like Midhat Frashëri who had not yet committed themselves to the national cause at all.

It was impossible for even those elements most hostile to the Communist Party to deny the guiding role the Party had already played or to oppose openly the proposals Enver Hoxha advanced on behalf of the Party for the continued prosecution of the war. Objections centred around such trivial questions as calling the fighting units 'partisan units' or having red stars as insignia. But these differences were

disposed of and the Conference, which was not a meeting of various political parties but of the whole spectrum of nationalist elements under the leadership of the Communist Party alone, was able to get on with its task of creating a common National Liberation Front.

The Front included all the patriotic forces in the country organised under a General National Liberation Council. It was committed to an intensification of the war in all sectors with no compromise. Throughout the country local and regional National Liberation Councils were to be elected by the people, functioning legally in liberated zones and underground in districts still occupied by the enemy. These Councils had the double task of acting as mobilisation centres for the armed revolution and as organs of local authority which would replace fascist rule as it was overthrown. In this way the re-establishment of a bourgeois-landlord regime, following on the collapse of fascist power, would be prevented, and the National Liberation Councils would remain the basic organs of the new democratic authority till such time as a constituent assembly could be convoked after the liberation of the whole country.

The Conference of Peza thus merged two historic processes in a common revolutionary struggle: the national liberation war for independence and the popular revolution for establishing true democracy in Albania.

Alarmed at this development the Italian fascist authorities immediately sent a punitive expedition under Francesco Jacomoni to attack Peza and other centres of partisan activity. In the cities a campaign of unrestrained terror was launched against communists and those suspected of supporting them. Unable to crush the partisan units, the fascists massacred peasants, burned whole villages and arrested and tortured people indiscriminately.

But the partisan bands continued to grow in number and strength and more and more liberated zones were created – in Peza, Skrapar, Kurvelesh, Çermenika, Martanesh, Opar, Mallakastra. The authority of the National Liberation Councils operated freely over wider and wider stretches of the country.

By the end of 1942 there were more than 10,000 fighters

in the resistance army organised in partisan units. Each unit, usually of 50 or 60 men, had a commander who need not be a Communist Party member and a political adviser appointed by the regional committee of the Party. The adviser was responsible for the carrying out of a correct political line, both in the unit itself and in the area in which it operated. Commander and adviser took joint decisions on the general character of the unit's objectives and on matters of principle; but the commander had priority on all military questions as long as his orders were not at variance with the political line of the Party nor the agreed strategy of the war.

There was a cell of Party members in each partisan unit, meeting regularly to discuss military operations and the provision of supplies, the well-being of the partisans and the admission or expulsion of members. Study sessions were held on Marxist-Leninist theory, the international communist and workers movement and the history of Albania.

These Party cells, working under the guidance of the commissar or political adviser, were responsible for the morale of the units, for maintaining a martial spirit, imparting love for the people and loyalty to the country, encouraging an international outlook, strengthening the close links of partisan comradeship and eliminating illiteracy among the fighting people.

Military discipline hardly existed in the units from a formal point of view, but the rules of military conduct which the partisans imposed on themselves were very strict. Orders of the commander and the political adviser were carried out zealously even when obedience involved the probability of dying in action. Of particular importance was the absolute integrity of partisans in all their dealings with the people and their property – 'not taking so much as a piece of thread for which they did not pay.'

The units, their own morale and political understanding raised by the Communist Party, disseminated in turn among the masses of the people a warlike spirit and a grasp of the political aspects of the liberation struggle. As soon as a region was cleared of carabinieri and militia, the partisan units dissolved the local government and replaced it with a freely-elected National Liberation Council. They assumed the

task of protecting the people of the liberated zones not only from enemy counter-attacks, but from robbers and spies and all those who would take advantage of the confused situation to defraud the people in any way. They began courses to combat illiteracy, they staged theatrical performances which by dramatising the national movement and caricaturing the enemy both entertained the people and raised their enthusiasm for liberating themselves. The partisan bands thus demonstrated their character as an armed force of the people with a political rôle.

And the people for their part soon came to regard the partisan units as their own army. They supported the units whole-heartedly, supplying information about the enemy, capturing spies and detaining suspected persons moving about in the liberated areas. Their houses were always open to the partisans and they shared with them what food there was. In the cities cash, clothes and medicine were supplied freely. Women made uniforms for the liberation fighters and the funds of the liberation war were generously increased by the people's gifts.

When the units were not engaged in military operations nor in carrying out their political tasks in the National Liberation Councils, they studied the tactics of partisan warfare and practised to make themselves expert with various weapons. Each partisan was required to master not only the weapons he himself carried but all other weapons used by that particular unit; and there were few who did not become deadly sharpshooters.

The units were equipped with conventional rifles, submachine guns, pistols, hand grenades, light machine guns and, later on, heavy machine guns, mortars and 45 mm howitzers. Most of the arms were of Italian make captured in military operations against the enemy on the principle: 'You must fight in order to take from the enemy what you need to fight him'. There were also older weapons from the time of the Turkish occupation and the First World War, which people had kept concealed throughout the period of Zogist rule. Heavier armament captured from the enemy was usually destroyed since it would be useless to highly mobile units.

Typical of this period of struggle was the liberation of

Corovoda, near Berat, in September 1942. By a series of hit and run attacks the enemy forces in the area were so weakened that it became possible to mount an assault liberating the village and surrounding countryside. This was followed by brutal reprisals; but these savage counter-liberation actions, far from intimidating people, inspired them with a greater hatred for the invaders of their country and a stronger commitment to the national independence forces.

The way in which the people rallied to the side of the partisans was shown in the battle of Gjormi, southeast of Vlora, where 300 volunteers joined the guerrilla force under the leadership of Mehmet Shehu and Hysni Kapo, making possible a shattering victory over 2000 heavily armed Italian troops who were completely routed on January 2, 1943, leaving the fascist commander among the hundreds of dead on the field.

A few weeks later partisan units of the Korça district besieged and destroyed the whole fascist military garrison of Voskopoja. All along the Kukës-Puka highway, victories were scored against the Italians. In three months at the beginning of 1943 the liberated area almost doubled. So disastrous for the Italians were these operations that the Viceroy Jacomoni was replaced by General Pariani, in February, with orders to intensify violence against the whole population.

During that year the partisan units, which had up till then operated against the enemy in isolated groups, began to combine for attacks on a larger scale. Territorial units were set up in the bigger villages which could be quickly assembled to go into battle with the permanent partisan formations.

By March, 1943, at the first national Communist Party conference held at Labinot, near Elbasan, Enver Hoxha's report on behalf of the Central Committee could record 16 months of victories. The mastering of Marxist-Leninist teachings by Party members was stressed and the idea that 'in time of war there was no need for books' was strongly criticised. The conference elected Enver Hoxha Secretary General of the Party's political bureau and those elected to the Central Committee included Nako Spiru, Hysni Kapo, Gogo Nushi, Mehmet Shehu and Vasil Shanto.

Right through spring and early summer attacks were mounted against the enemy of ever-increasing force. Severe defeats were imposed on Italian troops near the Selenica mine in the Vlora district, at Leskovik on the Struga-Dibra highway, at the Kiçok Pass and at Permet. In the Permet battle alone over 500 Italians were wiped out in the five days fighting to liberate the city. Partisan detachments from the Korça, Gjirokastra and Berat districts combined forces in this action in which tens of military vehicles were destroyed and a vast amount of arms and ammunition captured. On July 6th Albanian partisans carried out their first attack on German troops at Barmash on the Korça-Janina highway.

In the nation-wide wave of enthusiasm following on these military successes the Communist Party proposed that the National Liberation General Council should meet, mainly for the purpose of transforming the partisan units into a people's liberation army. At Labinot, where the first Party conference had taken place, the meeting was convened on July 4th, 1943. The Albanian National Liberation Army, at that time numbering 10,000 fighters, was to be organised by a unanimously-appointed General Staff with Enver Hoxha as chief political adviser. This General Staff assumed the strategic and operational conduct of the armed struggle and was assisted in centralising the war effort by the establishment of district staffs to co-ordinate regional initiative with the over-all battle plan. The General Staff announced on July 30th: 'So long as one single armed fascist remains in our country our war must continue most ferociously'.

The development of people's war made possible the great victories of the Albanian National Liberation Army in the summer and autumn of 1943. Nearly 1000 Italian troops were killed in the battles fought by partisans and people during July at Mallakastra and Tepelena where several enemy divisions had been massed in an attempt to crush resistance. The fascists suffered further losses at the battle of Pojska on the highway between Thana and Pogradeç. In the passes of Shtama and Buall where 3000 local inhabitants fought shoulder to shoulder with the partisans, in the Dibra, Gjirokastra, Korça and Shkodra districts bloody actions took place during the month of August in which the Italians lost

more than 1500 killed. In September attacks were launched on German troops in Konispol and on a German convoy along the Elbasan-Tirana highway.

Staggered by these military disasters the Italian commander-in-chief reported to Rome that 'the majority of the Albanian people, without class distinction, have risen up against Italy and against the stationing of our troops in Albania.' He urged headquarters to increase immediately the number of occupation forces to enable him to cope with the situation.

* * *

The Albanian people in their war of resistance were learning the same lessons and developing the same methods of fighting as other people whose countries have been invaded by powerful, heavily-armed imperialist armies – the people of China in their struggle against the Japanese or the people of Vietnam against the United States. The principles of people's war, waged by ordinary people against aggressive professional forces equipped with all the martial resources of highly industrialised nations, have been developed into a political and military science, a science enabling, in the words of Mao Tsetung, 'the people of a small country to defeat aggression by a big country, if only they dare to rise in struggle, dare to take up arms and grasp in their own hands the destiny of their country'.

That people's war is indeed a science is demonstrated by the fact that all who have perfected this kind of warfare in victorious practice have independently arrived at the same conclusions about its successful prosecution. This science has been further attested and inventively elaborated by the experience of the Albanian people in their resistance struggle against fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. A summary of these experiences was compiled by Mehmet Shehu just after the war, in 1947, as a guide to the correct development of a national army.

Mehmet Shehu had fought as a volunteer during the civil war in Spain where Italian and German support brought victory to the fascists. From the very beginning he was actively involved in his own country's liberation struggle

against those same two powers. In August, 1943, he helped to organise and took command of the First Shock Brigade, a military formation marking the advance from small guerrilla units to higher forms of warfare.

One of the main features of people's war is the recognition of the importance of morale, the advantage enjoyed by those who are conscious of fighting a just war as opposed to those fighting an unjust one. This advantage, formulated in the principle 'men are more important than weapons', always lies with those waging people's war which cannot, by its very nature, ever be an aggressive war waged in someone else's country.

Mehmet Shehu makes this point in his summing up of the experience of the national liberation war. 'In fighting on the plains as well as in the mountains *man* is the decisive factor that determines the fate of the war regardless of any development or armaments. A small army can defeat a bigger one, superior in numbers and means, if it wages a *just* war and if it is made up of men who are *politically enlightened* on the just nature of the war they are waging, united in their determination to overcome the enemy, resolved to the end to shed their last drop of blood to achieve victory and well trained to face adversities in battle. On the field of battle *man* can replace the *weapon*, but weapons can never diminish the rôle of men. Without men a weapon is nothing but a dead piece of iron, lifeless and powerless'.

In people's war the relation between armed fighters and the masses of the people is crucial. Success depends on the partisan being able to live among and move among the people 'like a fish in water'. The people are the intelligence and the commissariat of the fighting troops, and victory in a liberation struggle is ultimately determined by the people's willingness to share all the hazards of war with their men in the field.

This relationship is maintained on the one hand by the disciplined conduct of the armed forces. As a people's army, springing from the people, fighting with and for the people, they must treat all as equals and brothers. They must have the strictest regard for the property as well as for the persons of the men and women with whom they come in contact, helping them through the hardships of a protracted war and,

in the liberated areas, setting up schools, providing medical care, improving village amenities, as a promise of the better life to be won with the victorious conclusion of the resistance struggle.

On the other hand the relationship is maintained as the workers and peasants do realise that they have a stake in the war which goes beyond simply eliminating a dangerous and brutal invading force. They must be sustained by their understanding that the war is revolutionary as well as liberative, not being fought to restore previous forms of local exploitation and oppression but to establish socialism, or at least to create the conditions of a genuine people's democracy in which socialism can be developed as a successive stage.

This political aspect of people's war was expressed by the Albanian Communist Party in its declaration on the objectives of the war: to free the country from foreign invaders, to do away with local reaction, to set up a People's Democratic Republic, to confiscate the large estates of the feudal chiefs and the accumulated wealth of merchant speculators and to enact land reform laws, to inaugurate a good life for the people in a free and truly democratic Albania.

Because this political perspective must guide military operations, a strong political leadership is essential for the successful waging of people's war. As Mehmet Shehu pointed out: 'Former wars of our people have not been successful because the people lacked a capable political party to lead them in their just struggles. Only such a party can mobilise, train and lead the people in armed struggle, enabling them to defeat a bigger enemy. Our people could cope with the hardships of an unequal war because the organiser and director of the liberation movement, the Albanian Communist Party, through its correct political line of action, led them from victory to victory. Without political commissars and political organs in the army it would not have been possible to train our fighting troops politically and morally and we would not have had an army willing at all times to lay down their very lives for the people. The members of the Party were always the first to attack and the last to retreat.'

Thus the Albanian national war of liberation can be seen as

successfully exemplifying the political characteristics of people's war generally – the response to the aggressive acts of capitalist states of the masses, organised under working class leadership committed to ending all forms of exploitation and guided by a communist party capable of appraising local conditions in the light of universal revolutionary experience. The formulation applies, of course, not only to resistance to the Axis powers but to liberation movements since the War in many colonial and semi-colonial countries.

Mehmet Shehu has shown how a partisan army differs from a regular army in the way it is recruited, the role it is required to play and, most important, the political background out of which it emerges. The partisan army is made up entirely of volunteers who join the ranks of their own free will. There are no age nor sex restrictions and partisan formations include men advanced in years, young women and boy and girl pioneers as well as men of military age.

Partisans are, for the most part, an infantry equipped with light weapons. Emerging from circumstances of a people occupied by foreign aggressors or oppressed by internal reaction, they have to begin fighting with whatever they can get hold of since arms and the factories to produce them are in the hands of the invaders or the régime in power. Progressively they arm themselves with weapons snatched from the enemy.

While a regular army seeks to clear its opponents from the area in which it operates, the partisan army is interwoven through and within the enemy's field of operations, providing opportunities for sabotage, cutting lines of communication, attacking isolated concentrations and spreading terror and confusion through the ranks of the enemy. Terrorising the enemy as a step toward the development of full scale liberation warfare must not be confused with isolated terrorist acts which represent a distrust of the revolutionary movement.

The tactics of a regular army are based mainly on numbers, both of men and means. Partisan tactics are based on quality of fighters – their initiative, devotion and combative spirit. A regular army relies on the combined fire power of all its units, while the partisan army depends on the excellence of marksmanship, the positioning of men to make the best use

of cover and, always, the element of surprise.

Being inferior to the enemy in numbers necessitates the partisan principle of the 'main blow', using mobility and knowledge of the terrain to concentrate forces secretly and quickly at the right time and place to achieve relative superiority over the enemy for a knock-out blow. The morale and physical fitness of the partisans, the configuration and topographical features of the ground, time and weather conditions, possibilities of reinforcement from other formations and, above all, the political situation in the area where the fighting is taking place, are all elements in these tactics. Mobility, of course, is essential in attacking the enemy where he is weakest – on the flanks or, better still, in the rear.

Although the overall nature of people's war is defensive in the sense that external aggressors have brought the war to the people by invading their country, it is of the greatest importance that the people's army should be imbued with the spirit of attack, acquired by assailing the enemy wherever he may be and as often as the occasion arises. To make use of one of their main weapons, surprise, the partisans must never lose the initiative and must never find themselves fighting a defensive war of merely trying to hold ground. 'To allow the initiative to slip from your hands,' Mehmet Shehu warned, 'to hang back and fail to pursue the enemy, to fail to go for him and permit him to go for you, to pursue you, means defeat pure and simple . . . continuity of operations is at the root of all other principles guiding partisan warfare. Only through repeated attacks can be maintained the moral superiority over the enemy essential for success.'

For this reason military operations were co-ordinated through general directives, warlike slogans and orders from above in the most elastic terms allowing local commanders the maximum scope for initiative and never providing any excuse for partisans to lose their martial impetus waiting for further instructions.

This point was made by Enver Hoxha in his criticism of a partisan battalion which was caught off guard in September 1943. 'Partisans should never be on the defensive. Standing on your own ground might well bring our army face to face with a major enemy force which could exterminate it. You

must by all means take the offensive so that by speedy manoeuvring and frequent attacks we may confuse and cause the enemy losses, by blowing up bridges and hitting convoys incessantly we may disrupt the enemy's plans, by raiding depots we may make free with the material to equip new arrivals in the ranks of the partisans . . . We are here in our own land. We are better acquainted with our mountains and mountain passes. The people are on our side in most regions and therefore it cannot be tolerated that the enemy should ever take us by surprise.'

Chapter Six

Relations of the Liberation Leadership with other National Groups and with the Allies

The reverses suffered by the Italian forces of occupation in Albania contributed to the overthrow of Mussolini on July 27, 1943; but there was no slackening of the national liberation war which the General Staff ordered to be continued with even greater intensity until Italy and Germany too surrendered unconditionally.

When Italy did finally capitulate on September 8, the Central Committee of the Albanian Communist Party and the General Staff instructed the partisans to break off the armed conflict and propose to the Italian troops that hostilities between them should end and that they should join together against the common enemy of Albania and Italy – Nazi Germany. At that time Hitler's armies were pouring into Albania from Macedonia and Greece. The Italian commander who had replaced Jacomoni, General Renzo Dalmazzo, rejected this proposal and ordered the Italian soldiers to surrender to the Germans as most of them did.

Many thousands, however, deserted and sought refuge among the Albanian people. Some 1500 Italian soldiers volunteered to enlist in the ranks of the partisans, forming a company of fighters called the Antonio Gramsci battalion, after the Marxist intellectual and leader of the Italian Communist Party, himself of Albanian descent, who had died in one of Mussolini's prisons.

The partisans had clashed for the first time with German troops after defeating the Italian garrison at Permet. The Germans were pushing through Albania from Korça toward the Greek city of Janina when the partisans attacked them and inflicted serious losses. The Nazi troops took revenge by setting fire to the nearby village of Borova and murdering

every man, woman and child who had not been able to escape. One hundred and seven people were massacred by the Germans in this brutal reprisal.

This was to be the pattern of the war against the German Nazis who were much more ruthless and determined than the Italians. As Enver Hoxha wrote to the First Shock Brigade in November, 1943: 'German bands of 50 to 60 soldiers led, to be sure, by traitors, come and burn up villages and attack our own bands where they least expect them. You should point out to all our comrades that our battalions in general seem to be under the impression that they still have to do with Mussolini's troops who lacked the spirit of combat.' And the liberation forces quickly rallied to deal with this more dangerous and more vicious foe.

A violent encounter took place near Vlora in the course of which the partisans freed 7000 Italian soldiers and officers held as prisoners of war and forced the Germans to retreat after sustaining heavy losses.

But more and more German troops rolled into Albania from different parts of the Balkans and soon with an army force of more than 70,000 men, they greatly outnumbered the partisans. After hard fighting the Nazi troops occupied all the major cities and key communication points; but the liberation forces in fierce combats prevented them from deploying over the whole country and most regions and a number of towns remained free for the continued operation of the partisan forces. Wherever the Germans were, they imposed a curfew and proclaimed that from 20 to 30 Albanians would be shot or hanged for every German soldier killed, for every act of sabotage, for concealing weapons or food and this threat was ruthlessly carried out. The bitterest part of the liberation struggle had just begun.

Along with operations in the field against the partisan units, the Nazis also pursued a policy of enrolling the forces of internal reaction for use against the liberation movement. Not only feudal chiefs and wealthy merchants collaborated with the Germans, but also many of those who belonged to bourgeois-led nationalist groups like Balli Kombëtar (National Front) and Legaliteti (Legality). They covered their betrayal with the absurd argument that the German invaders

were prepared to recognise Albania's 'independence' against Greek or Yugoslav claims at the very time when the Nazis were savagely trying to turn the whole country into a base from which to operate against allied landings in southern Europe or against the popular, anti-fascist forces in the rest of the Balkans.

With the intention of setting up a quisling government the Germans called a 'constituent assembly' in Tirana on October 18, 1943. The recently formed partisan Third Brigade was close enough to the capital to score a direct hit with a captured field gun on the palace where the meeting was being held. The collaborators fled in panic to hold their assembly in a less conspicuous building. Early in November a puppet government was formed from those who had worked with the Italians, the Zogists and members of the anti-communist 'resistance' organisations. The National Liberation General Council warned people all over Albania not to be deceived by these sordid political manoeuvres.

Bourgeois nationalist organisations like Balli Kombëtar, founded ostensibly for the purpose of resisting the fascist invaders under a non-communist leadership, had first come into being at the end of the previous year, 1942. At that time the resistance struggle in Albania had already reached a level which led the Allied Governments to recognise the rôle of the Albanians in the war against the Axis Powers. A statement read in the House of Commons by Britain's Foreign Secretary, Anthony Eden, acknowledged the freedom and independence of Albania and left it to the Albanian people to decide at the end of the war what régime and form of government they would have. Albania's borders would be discussed at the post-war peace conference. The next day the Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs, V. Molotov, expressed sympathy with the Albanian liberation movement and praised the heroism of the partisans. The Soviet Government recognised the Albanian patriotic forces as allies in the anti-fascist coalition and affirmed the right of the Albanian people to choose the form of government they wanted. The United States Secretary of State, Cordell Hull, also praised the Albanian resistance and declared Albania's right to be a free and independent state.

This international recognition of the successes achieved by the National Liberation Front led by the Albanian Communist Party sounded a note of alarm for those elements in the country who did not wish to see their privileged position in the old Albania wiped out in a new socialist Albania after the war. The National Liberation Front drew its strength from the overwhelming majority of the Albanian people – the working class, the poor and middle peasantry, the petty bourgeoisie and most of the medium bourgeoisie in the cities, patriotic intellectuals and even certain individuals from the upper strata. It welcomed into its ranks all who were genuinely prepared to fight against the fascist enemy. The former exploiting classes,the landlords, feudal chieftains, reactionary bourgeoisie, the majority of rich peasants and those intellectuals and clergy who served their interests, had openly collaborated with the Italian occupiers. But with even the possibility of an Allied victory it became necessary to think of establishing a claim to participate in the post-war 'free choice of government' promised to the Albanian people.

The most important of the 'nationalist' groupings brought into being for this purpose was Balli Kombëtar with Midhat Frashëri, who was anti-Zogist, anti-fascist and anti-communist, as its figurehead. With him, however, were well known collaborators like Ali Kelcyra and ambitious landlords like Nuredin bey Vlora. In fact, as was subsequently discovered, the Italians themselves prompted the formation of Balli Kombëtar as a counter to the groupings of genuine patriots which came into being at the Peza Conference. A pro-Zogist 'national' organisation, Legaliteti, was set up by Abaz Kupi, after he had broken with the National Liberation General Council to which he had been appointed at the Peza Conference. Acting under the instructions of the British who wanted to influence Albania after the war through a restoration of the monarchy, Abaz Kupi maintained that only Zog's regime was 'legal' and he demanded that the National Liberation Front must rally under the banner of Legaliteti. Reactionary Catholics in the north grouped themselves under the leadership of a big landowner, John Markagjon, who had every interest in keeping northern Albania feudal.

At first these 'nationalist' organisations did attract some people into their ranks who thought they were seriously intended to resist foreign occupation, and the National Liberation Front made every effort to work with them and draw them into the anti-fascist war. At the Labinot Conference of the Liberation Front the Communist Party invited Balli Kombëtar to agree to proposals for co-operating against the invaders and their Albanian collaborators. This approach was rejected on the grounds that the time was not right for an open uprising and it would be better to wait for the promised 'second front' which might even be opened up in Albania itself. This policy of waiting, of wishing to conserve its forces for fighting the communists after the war, not the fascists during it, gained Balli Kombëtar its description by the peasant patriots as 'the big grey ass which waited and waited and never cropped grass'.

The Communist Party, in line with its policy of building the widest possible national front against the enemy, continued its efforts to win over the Balli Kombëtar for joint action; but at the same time it was necessary to expose the plots of the leaders of this organisation to betray the liberation movement to the fascists. Secret documents came into the possession of the Party revealing that two leading members of the Balli Kombëtar, Ali Kelcyra and Nuredin Vlora, had signed an agreement in March 1943, with the Italian commander in chief, Renzo Dalmazzo, known as the Dalmazzo-Kelcyra Protocol, according to which the Balli Kombëtar promised not to start any armed revolt in southern Albania if the Italians promised not to attack those armed bands respecting the agreement. This left the Balli Kombëtar free to organise their operations not against the foreign occupying forces but against the partisans.

As these 'nationalist' groupings began to believe that landings in Albania by British and American forces were possible, they came out in blatant opposition to the partisans. At Kolonja, with the support of the Italians, the Balli Kombëtar launched a surprise assault on a partisan formation. Again, at Mallakastra, while partisan battalions were engaged in a fierce battle with a larger Italian force in front of them, the Balli Kombëtar suddenly assailed them

from the rear. By this time leaders like Midhat Frashëri had become so fanatic in their hatred of communism that they endorsed these treacherous attacks. The open military collaboration with the enemy of these organisations representing the reactionary and exploiting classes of Zogist times had the effect of merging the war for the liberation of the country with a civil war to determine the social and political character of a liberated Albania.

A last effort to avert a fratricidal war was made by the General Council of the Liberation Front at the Communist Party's suggestion in August, 1943, when a meeting was arranged at Mukje, near Kruja, between Balli Kombëtar chiefs and a delegation from the Liberation Council. But the delegates from the Council, Ymer Dishnica, a member of the Party's Political Bureau, and Mustafa Gjinishi, instead of defending the line of the National Front under Communist Party leadership which had been established at the Peza Conference and which had proved so successful in the liberation war, gave way under pressure and agreed to an independent existence for the Balli Kombëtar on an equal footing with the National Liberation Front. This would have resulted not only in splitting the liberation forces but also in paving the way for a restoration after the war of reactionary elements who had not fired a shot in the country's defence.

On the initiative of Enver Hoxha the Central Committee of the Communist Party condemned the failure of Ymer Dishnica and Mustafa Gjinishi to demand that the Balli Kombëtar join in the war against the fascist invaders and rejected the Mukje agreement out of hand. At the Second National Liberation Conference at Labinot in September, 1943, the main issue was the question of the people's democratic power and the National Liberation Councils were recognised as the sole representatives of that power. Regulations for the National Liberation Councils were formulated and executive organs for both the General Council and the district councils were set up. The Mukje agreement was publicly condemned as being inimical to the prosecution of the war and the unity of the Albanian people. But even then, while exposing the collaboration of the Balli Kombëtar with the enemy, instructions were issued to make use of any

chance for working with elements of the Balli Kombëtar and other political groups outside the liberation movement if they ever did decide to participate in the war and if they agreed to recognise the National Liberation Councils as the only expression of popular power.

Early in 1943 a British military mission was sent to Albania by the Inter-Allied Mediterranean Command to work with the National Liberation forces. Soon after its arrival the mission established secret contact with the leaders of Balli Kombëtar and with Abaz Kupi of Legaliteti. Even though it was obvious by this time that these two organisations were not only refusing to engage the fascists, but often actively assisting them, they continued to receive the greater part of the aid from Britain and the United States in arms, ammunition, clothing and gold. The Inter-Allied Mediterranean Command brought pressure to bear on the General Staff to order partisans not to fire on the anarchic bands of these reactionary groupings even when under attack from them and, further, insisted that British officers should be recognised as arbitrators in the relations between Balli Kombëtar or Legaliteti and the National Liberation Council.

Meanwhile the British mission tried to persuade Abaz Kupi in particular to make some show of fighting the German troops, the Italians by this time having capitulated. But Abaz Kupi became less and less willing to commit his forces in any action at all, arguing that the defeat of the Germans could be left to the great powers: his task was to save his strength for the defeat of Albanians who opposed Zog's return and the restoration of the old reactionary régime. The British had no better luck with a group of what would now be called 'revisionists' under Mustafa Gjinishi and Ymer Dishnica who had broken with the Communist Party after being criticised for the surrender over the Mukje agreement. They even plotted with such notorious reactionaries as the feudal chieftain John Markagjon who had made no pretence of opposing the Germans.

What the British mission was looking for was an anti-communist force prepared to wage all-out war against the Nazis and, at the conclusion of hostilities, to restore a government in Albania favourable to British interests in the

Mediterranean. No such force existed in Albania. The liberation movement was too united under the leadership of the Communist Party and the forces of reaction too openly involved with the enemy and too lacking in popular support to provide the British any opportunity for intervening in Albania's civil war as they were to do so disruptively in Greece.

The Albanian liberation struggle was simply a specific instance of the dilemma confronting the governments of Britain and the United States in many parts of the world once the assaults of the Axis Powers had been checked and thoughts turned to questions of post-war settlements. The threat of fascist conquest had brought together in a defensive alliance governments and peoples with very different long-term aims. In many countries overrun by the Italians, the Germans or the Japanese the resistance forces which gathered to expel the invaders were either communist-led or sympathetic to communism. The anti-fascist war thus became also, in countries like Albania, a revolutionary war to prevent the previous exploiters from regaining power – exploiters who may have represented or been supported by the older imperialist countries like Britain or France.

The communist-led partisans of Albania certainly had no intention of ridding themselves of fascist aggressors in order to let Britain, the United States or any other imperialist power back in to exploit them either directly or indirectly. When Prime Minister Winston Churchill, speaking on behalf of British capitalism, stated that he had not assumed that office 'to preside over the liquidation of the British empire', he was, in effect, briefing the British mission in Albania to work for a post-war settlement consonant with the interests of British imperialism in the Mediterranean. The Central Committee of the Albanian Communist Party accordingly instructed its local organs that allied missions 'should not interfere in our internal affairs and should in no way be regarded as arbiters between us and reactionary organisations. If our war against the common enemy is agreeable to them, so much the better. Otherwise the door is wide open for them to leave'.

The British military mission tried to convince the Albanian

Liberation Army General Staff that its forces should not be moved into northern Albania because they regarded that as Abaz Kupi's zone of action – even if he was not, in fact, acting. Meanwhile in London the British Government attempted to set up an Albanian government in exile under the discredited ex-King Zog. But British prestige suffered a severe blow when Brigadier Davies in command of the mission and two of his staff, all unfamiliar with guerrilla warfare, were captured by collaborators and handed over to the Germans.

By September, 1944, the leaders of the National Liberation Council felt that they had tolerated long enough the clumsy efforts of the British mission to find 'friendly' agents which only resulted in establishing contact with the enemies of the partisans who were bearing the whole brunt of the war. Enver Hoxha demanded the withdrawal of the mission which he no longer hesitated to describe as 'agents of foreign reaction'.

The importance of the episode for the Albanians was that it emphasised the necessity of self-reliance and of not depending on outside assistance if they were to preserve their independence after the war. Subsequent demands of the Anglo-American Mediterranean Command to send paratroops and special army units to Albania to join the final stages of the fight against the Germans were firmly rejected. The Albanian National Liberation Army insisted that it was capable of freeing the entire country on its own. When British commandos landed in Saranda after Liberation brigades had wiped out the German garrison there, the General Staff compelled the British to remove their forces without delay. The message sent to a British warship lying off Durrës was an invitation to dinner for all the officers and men who cared to land unarmed but a reception of bullets if they came ashore equipped to outstay that limited welcome.

The same principle governed relations with the United States. The Albanians recognised the Americans as allies but resisted any suggestion of sending United States forces into Albania. In 1945 when President Truman proposed to send two destroyers to Durrës to pick up various Americans who found themselves in Albania, he was told that would not be

necessary since these people would be marched across the frontier into Greece and could be picked up there.

As for the various pseudo-nationalist groupings like Balli Kombëtar and Legaliteti, in December, 1943, the General Council finally abandoned any hope of getting them to join in the fighting and denounced them all as treacherous collaborationists. Abaz Kupi was expelled from the National Liberation Council in which his place had been reserved long after his hatred of communism had carried him into the enemy camp.

Chapter Seven

The Liberation War against the Nazis and Final Victory

In November, 1943, the Germans decided to launch a massive offensive operation to crush resistance in Albania once and for all. The winter campiagn, commanded by the Nazi general Fehn, involved the troops of four divisions, some 45,000 men, equipped with the most modern weapons and heavily supported by armoured cars, tanks and aircraft. In addition, the puppet government and those so-called 'nationalist' organisations which had by this time gone over completely to the enemy, supplied a force of 10,000 mercenaries who were particularly useful to the Nazis for espionage and for acting as guides in the wilder regions. Against this tremendous force the National Liberation Army had 20,000 men organised in four brigades armed with rifles, automatic rifles, light and heavy machine guns, light and heavy mortars and a few field pieces which they had captured and man-handled up into the mountains.

The campaign began with a series of lightning preliminary blows delivered by the German army against the Peza zone, near Tirana, where the Third Brigade had to fight fiercely to break out toward Çermenika, against the partisans in the Dibra zone and against Berat which had been liberated but was soon reoccupied by the Germans with the most brutal consequences for the civilian population.

A few days later while the partisans were still adjusting their positions to cope with the first assault a strong German force attacked the liberated zone of Mallakastra, defended by the First Shock Brigade. The Brigade was very nearly cut off and had to manoeuvre quickly into a position from which it was possible to slice through the enemy's lines. But to carry out this movement it was necessary first to cross the river Vjosa and this was managed by mounting a diversionary

attack from behind Symiza Hill which gave the bulk of the partisan forces just time to get their equipment across the stream on the one uncaptured barge. After a short bloody encounter in which the German troops were put temporarily to flight, the rest of the Brigade forded the river and the whole force then moved into the Mesapliku district. Here the First Brigade regrouped and struck back, alternating its counter attacks with those being launched by partisans in the Vlora district. Heavy losses were inflicted on the Germans at Vajza and along the Bolena-Vranishta line. The First Brigade then swung over toward Zagoria while partisans from Vlora moved into the Mesapliku area to mop up Balli Kombëtar elements who had been operating with the enemy.

In December a crack German division trained in mountain warfare, with 1,500 'nationalist' mercenaries to act as guides and informers, struck at the rough upland regions of central Albania above Tirana where the General Staff of the Liberation Army had its headquarters and where the Second and Third Partisan Brigades were concentrated. These newly-formed brigades made up of elements from different regions and not yet consolidated into fighting units capable of operating independently, were thrown into confusion for a time and suffered heavy losses. They could not halt the German offensive, but by courageous fighting when almost cornered, by increasingly skilful manoeuvring and feinting the partisan forces did succeed in evading the traps laid for them and slipping away to other districts where they were able to re-form.

The German plan for the winter campaign of 1943-44 was to co-ordinate their preliminary attacks in such a way as to drive the bulk of the partisan force into the south and then, cutting off their retreat, to surround and annihilate them in the Vlora, Berat, Korça triangle. On January 7, three German divisions, with their usual complement of collaborators, advanced from three different points to carry out the second, hunt-and-destroy, part of the plan in the southern region. In this operation the interior districts were ravaged, the villages and towns on which the partisans depended were captured and put to flames and hundreds of peasants were brutally murdered in typical Nazi fashion.

A number of fierce running engagements were fought between German troops and the Liberation forces of the First and Fourth Brigades. The partisans kept falling back to avoid a decisive action on the enemy's terms and by breaking through the advancing lines and then attacking from the rear succeeded in keeping the German offensive off balance. On January 21 the bloodiest battle of this stage of the war was fought at Tenda-e-Qypit, the Tent of Jars, near Permet. Two battalions of the First Brigade and the Skrapari guerrilla detachment rushed down from opposite directions on Nazi troops trying to close the ring and put them to flight.

Another German division was brought up from Greece to complete the encirclement. Through heavy snow, across swollen rivers, always attacking in spite of privations and shortage of ammunition, the First and Fourth Brigades, supported by other partisan elements and by local groups of armed peasants, consistently out-manoeuvred and out-fought the numerically superior and better equipped forces of the Wehrmacht. Each time the Germans thought they had finished off a company of partisans and began moving away to another sector, those 'finished off' partisans would rise up to attack their flanks and rear. Advancing toward Vlora where resistance was thought to be weaker, the Germans unexpectedly encountered a new brigade, the Sixth, one of three new fighting units formed in the very heat of battle.

In the second half of February, 1944, the brigades and territorial battalions had so successfully warded off the various prongs of the German offensive that they were in a position to counter-attack. Three battalions of the First Brigade led by Mehmet Shehu struck back north into central Albania and suddenly appeared in the neighbourhood of Tirana, creating a serious diversion behind the enemy lines. It became increasingly difficult for the Germans to maintain their offensive in the face of partisan formations which kept springing into action where they were not supposed to be; and three months after it began the furious onslaught of the German winter campaign was over.

This campaign had thoroughly tested the people of Albania and their Liberation Army, finding them at the end more united and more determined than ever to fight on till

final victory. Close links between Communist Party, Liberation Army and the people from whom they had sprung and for whom they fought ensured the continued growth of the resistance movement in spite of the enormous odds against which they struggled. The people showed themselves unwavering in their devotion to the cause of national independence, providing the partisan detachments with food and clothing in a time of terrible scarcity and often, with whatever weapons they could find, taking an active part in the fighting by harassing the German convoys.

In the cities, too, people showed the same steadfast spirit under the most brutal acts of repression by Hitler's army of torturers and killers. Thousands of patriots, both communist and non-communist, partisans who had come into the towns for medical treatment and ordinary citizens who had dared to express their sympathy for the liberation struggle were rounded up and sent off to the extermination camps at Prishtina, Belgrade or Buchenwald itself. The Balli Kombëtar traitors were particularly useful to the Germans in pointing out patriots. On the night of February 4 alone the quisling police, on the authority of the collaborationist Minister of the Interior Xhafer Deva and acting under the direction of the Nazi captain, Langer, dragged 84 citizens of Tirana out of their beds and butchered them in front of their homes. Two young women, Bule Naipi and Persephone Kokedhima captured and questioned by the gestapo in Gjirokastra, underwent days and days of torture without revealing a single item of information useful to the Germans. At last they were dragged out, already more dead than alive, and hanged in the square bearing the name of Cerçiz Topulli the hero of an earlier liberation struggle.

The winter campaign had demonstrated the basic correctness of the structure of the Liberation Army and the soundness of its tactics. Having withstood the assault they went over to the offensive throughout the southern half of Albania. Early in March forces of the First Brigade and the Reshit Collak Battalion named for one of Albania's heroes, encircled a large number of irregular enemy formations near Korça and forced them to surrender. A few weeks later two battalions of the Fourth Brigade smashed a strong German

force in the Devolli region. The Fifth and Sixth Brigades, having eliminated Balli Kombëtar concentrations along the Vlora-Sevaster highway, suddenly launched swift attacks in the vicinity of Vlora and inside the city itself taking the Germans completely by surprise.

In April the General Staff of the Liberation Army issued an order co-ordinating these actions in a general spring campaign. 'Attack everywhere the barbarous Germans. Make short work of traitors. Hit the vital centres of the enemy. Demolish depots and barracks; blow up bridges and destroy roads; attack and liberate the countryside and cities of our beloved Albania. The destiny of the Fatherland is in your hands. The fate of our people is bound up with your weapons!'

Following on this order elements of the First and Fourth Brigade liberated Pogradeç after a twenty-four hour battle in which the Germans suffered heavy losses. The Seventh Brigade forced the enemy troops in the neighbourhood of Berat to shut themselves inside the city and when they were ordered out to try to recapture lost ground the partisans engaged them in a seven day battle ending in a serious German defeat. A reserve force of Germans was surprised on the banks of the Osumi River and left behind many dead and considerable quantities of arms and ammunition.

Engagements were also fought in central Albania at Peza and Kruja and even in the northern highlands where it was then possible for the partisans to extend their operations. A new brigade, the Eighth, was formed in the course of these nation-wide attacks which liberated vast areas from enemy control. On May 9 the Fifth Brigade ambushed a large German convoy coming from Greece and heading for Permet, inflicting heavy casualties and capturing much material.

On May 24, 1944, the Anti-fascist National Liberation Congress met in the liberated city of Permet. The 200 delegates representing the whole population supporting the liberation war were drawn from the ranks of revolutionary communists and sincere nationalists, workers, peasants and intellectuals, men and women, partisan fighters and political agitators operating behind the enemy lines in the first genuinely democratic election ever held in Albania. The

Committee chosen by the Anti-fascist Council elected by the Congress was recognised as the provisional governmental executive. The Secretary General of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Albania, Enver Hoxha, was elected Chairman of this Committee.

The Congress decided to set up divisions and army corps in the National Liberation Army and the formation of the First Storm Division was announced. Enver Hoxha was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Army. Not only was it unanimously agreed that the liberation war against the foreign aggressor must be intensified till the last fascist soldier had been expelled but also that hostilities should not cease before the complete destruction of all collaborationist organisations like Balli Kombëtar and Legaliteti.

All the political and economic agreements which the Zog government had entered into with foreign states were annulled as being against the interests of the Albanian people and it was further decided to bar the return of Ahmed Zog who had always plotted with external powers to secure his position in Albania. No other 'government' formed either within or outside the country was to be recognised as long as the Anti-fascist National Liberation Council, popularly elected by all the forces participating in the liberation struggle, remained in existence.

The National Liberation Council thus became the Provisional Democratic Government of the Albanian state, born of the revolutionary liberation war under the leadership of the Communist Party. It was democratic in relation to the popular forces in struggle which had brought it into being and dictatorial in relation to all the enemies of liberation within and without – a democratic dictatorship of the people, holding within itself in embryo the dictatorship of the working class which would begin to establish a socialist society when Albania was freed.

The Peza Conference had laid the foundations of the new state power. The Labinot Conference centralised this state power and proclaimed it uniquely authoritative. The Permet Congress, having rooted political power in the revolutionary people, founded the Albanian People's Democratic State. Its decisions were the basis of the state constitution.

Before adjournment the Congress re-affirmed its allegiance to the Soviet-Anglo-American alliance and sent greetings to the heads of three great powers – Stalin, Churchill and Roosevelt. But it also publicly denounced the attempts of the United States and British allies to interfere in the internal affairs of Albania. 'The time when Albania can be used as a medium of exchange in international bargaining is gone for ever'.

While the Congress of Permet was still in session the Germans, just three months after the collapse of their winter campaign, began their last great offensive to crush resistance in Albania. This final effort was dictated partly by the military necessity of suppressing the armed struggle to ensure the free movement of German troops between Greece and Yugoslavia on the eve of their retreat from the Balkans and partly by sheer vindictiveness against a people who had frustrated their military plans and humiliated them on the field of battle. During the last two weeks in May a force of some 35,000 men was assembled, made up of the divisions which had taken part in the winter offensive strengthened by the First Division of mountain troops brought up from Greece. The quisling government supplied 15,000 desperate puppet troops whose fate was now completely linked with the success or failure of the invaders. On May 28, the final day of the Permet Congress, the massive attack against the liberated zones of the south was launched.

Though the German force was larger and supported by heavier armour and more aircraft than in the winter offensive, the National Liberation Army had increased its own numbers and fighting spirit to a relatively greater degree. There were then 36,000 partisans most of whom had become seasoned guerrilla fighters experienced in both the defensive and offensive operations of people's war.

In the first two weeks of the June offensive the partisans suffered 500 casualties and more than 1,000 peasant men, women and children were murdered. But over 3,000 German and collaborationist officers and men were killed in the same period. And there were thousands of volunteers to replace the partisans who fell in battle.

Nowhere did the fascist forces succeed in carrying out the

plan of eliminating the liberation units. A German column coming from Greece by way of Bilisht did succeed in overrunning the liberated zone of Devolli. But another column advancing from Elbasan to join the German forces around Korça was brought to a shattered halt in a surprise attack by the First Brigade at the Moglica Bridge. A German column intended to attack the First Brigade from the rear never made contact at all and a fourth column setting out from Berat was so badly mauled by the Seventh and Twelfth Brigades that it had to withdraw to Berat again.

The second phase of the offensive started on June 5 with three German columns marching out from Korça. But partisans of the First Division were lying in wait all along the line of march. From Dushari Mountain across the Serpent Pass to Shemberdhej the partisan forces fought a fierce running battle killing 150 Germans for the loss of only 22 partisans. The Seventh and Twelfth Brigades drove back German forces advancing toward the Tent of Jars with a bayonet charge.

All operations in the Korça, Berat, Elbasan theatre having failed, the German divisions turned toward Saranda, Vlora and Gjirokastra in the south, throwing more than 20,000 troops into this thrust. The Sixth Brigade attacked German forces on four successive days along the Vlora-Saranda road, completely disrupting their advance. The main weight of the offensive was thrown into the Vlora-Gjirokastra zone on June 13; but the National Liberation Army had anticipated just such an assault and supported by volunteers from the local population blunted and turned back every prong of the German attack.

The Liberation Army command did not remain on the defensive during this early summer campaign. In response to the call for intensified war from the Congress of Permet it had been planned that the First Storm Division would strike northward beyond the Shkumbini River toward the end of June, and the decision to proceed with this operation even while the German offensive in the south was at its height proved to be a brilliant stroke.

As the First Division drove north through central Albania they were greeted enthusiastically by the people and soon new groups of fighting men joined in the advance. When the

Germans heard of this force, they thought at first that it was made up of fleeing remnants of the Liberation Army that was supposed to have been shattered in the south. But as one enemy stronghold after another fell to the partisans and whole areas were liberated, the Germans had quickly to abandon their abortive campaign in the south and pull their forces back to try to counter the threat of the First Division which was joined in the liberation of the central and northern district by the newly-formed Second Storm Division. While the region around Dibra was being cleared of the last of the Balli Kombëtar elements, this second Division suddenly appeared in the suburbs of the capital city itself, disrupting communications between Tirana and the rest of the country.

These two divisions were then incorporated into a yet greater military unit, the First Army Corps, and marched triumphantly into the last bastion of internal reaction, the feudal regions of northern Albania. The people of the inaccessible mountainous district around Mirdita had been left for centuries in ignorance and isolation, having resisted Turkish occupation at the cost of being cut off in their rugged fastnesses from any contact with the outside world. They were hopefully regarded by the collaborators as likely to resist the partisans with the same stubbornness. Instead these proud but backward mountaineers were soon won over by the courage and patriotism of the liberation fighters. The north was freed and only the palace of the ultra-reactionary chieftain, John Markagjon, was destroyed as an indication that patriarchal, feudal rule was ended and Mirdita, like other remote parts of the country, was to participate fully in the new independent Albania.

With the German forces divided and distracted by this campaign of the First Army Corps, the Twelfth and Fourteenth Brigades liberated Saranda and cleared the whole coastal region in the south. In September Berat and Gjirokastra were liberated. The Fourteenth and Nineteenth Brigades drove the Germans out of Vlora while the Second and Ninth Brigades drove toward Korça which was liberated on October 24. Only Elbasan, Durrës, Tirana and Shkodra still remained in enemy hands.

The National Liberation Army, now numbering 70,000

fighters, of whom nearly 6,000 were women, was part of the great international anti-fascist force which was rolling back the Nazis on every front. The Albanian command had no intention of waiting for the Germans, defeated elsewhere, simply to be withdrawn from the country. The Twenty-first and Twenty-second Corps of the Wehrmacht still had to be brought from Greece across Albania and out by way of Yugoslavia to take part in the defence of Germany itself. The National Liberation Army was determined to follow up the victorious campaigns which had already liberated three fourths of the country by striking heavy blows at the German troops moving north and at those still holding out in a few cities and strong points to try to secure them a safe passage through the country. By continuing to fight with the same ferocity which had broken the German grip on Albania the partisans were discharging their international obligations to other people engaged with the same enemy.

It was in these circumstances of having nearly concluded triumphantly the war of liberation that the second meeting of the National Council was held in liberated Berat on October 20. The assembly was faced not only with the task of finally completing the victorious struggle but also with all the political, economic and social problems of a free but war-ravaged state.

The Council took the formal decision of transforming the Anti-fascist National Committee into the Democratic Government of Albania with Enver Hoxha as Prime Minister and Minister of National Defence. Eleven government departments were set up, the most important being those concerned with the restoration of the economic and cultural life of the country. The Government assumed the responsibility of organising, as soon as conditions permitted, democratic elections for a constituent assembly which would draft a constitution for the new Albanian state. But without waiting for such an assembly the Conference approved unanimously the Declaration on the Rights of Citizens which guaranteed equality before the law, freedom of speech, of press, of religion and conscience, equal rights for men and women in both economic life and social activities, the right of secret and direct voting and the right to elect and be elected for all

persons over 18 years of age, the right of petitioning all government bodies, the right of appeal and so forth. All fascist and pro-fascist organisations were prohibited. The local National Liberation Councils which had been organs of both the government and the National Liberation Front, were thenceforth to function solely as governmental organs of the people's democratic power and the National Liberation Front would create its own separate mass organisations – of workers, of women, of youth.

A few days after the Berat Conference, on October 25, 1944, the National Liberation Army began its last great battle in the anti-fascist war – the liberation of the capital city of Tirana. This was the culmination of people's war, the point at which from isolated attacks by guerrilla bands progressing to a conflict of rapid movement in order to engage without crippling losses an enemy superior in numbers and equipment it was finally possible to meet the foe in full scale frontal war. It was fitting that this set piece of Tirana's liberation should be undertaken by the First Storm Division commanded by Major General Mehmet Shehu.

The Germans had begun moving north to Shkodra but they had left a full division to hold Tirana till the last of their forces had been withdrawn from Greece. During the first night of the attack about half of the city fell into the hands of the partisan battalions and the whole population of Tirana rose to help in the heroic struggle against tanks, armoured cars and enemy-held bunkers. They kept the partisan forces informed of enemy movements and supplied them with food and drink throughout the fierce battle. On the next day the fighting reached the centre of town and the staff of the First Division moved its headquarters inside the city.

From that stage the liberation proceeded desperately from street to street, from barricade to barricade and often from house to house. Very heavy fighting raged around the Mosque of Sulejman Bargjini, where a monument marks today one of the bloodiest encounters of the whole struggle. For the next 12 days the battle went on incessantly with fierce attacks and counter-attacks, every block bitterly contested.

At the height of the fighting the position of the partisans

in the city was threatened by a Nazi division advancing on Tirana from Elbasan. Other brigades detailed to operate in the vicinity of the capital were hastily assembled and thrown against the German relief column of more than 3,000 men. At Mushqetas on November 13 and 14 this German division was smashed and routed.

Then, on the morning of November 17, Tirana was completely liberated after 19 days of the hardest fighting of the war. More than 2,000 German officers and men were killed and the rest were taken prisoner; 25 cannon and 1,000 heavy machine guns were captured; over 200 tanks and armoured cars were destroyed or taken. The partisans suffered only 417 casualties in killed and wounded; but hundreds of civilians were lined up against walls and shot as the Germans retreated from one part of the city to another.

The utter defeat of the German forces in Tirana put an end to the Hitler terror and practically ended the war. What was left of the Nazi armies fled north to Shkodra where the partisans prepared to attack them. However, the Germans had lost all taste for fighting the Albanians. They blew up the larger bridges and pulled out of town during the night, crossing the frontier into Yugoslavia with hordes of collaborators trailing along with them. At dawn on November 29 the partisan brigades entered Shkodra without firing a shot and all Albania had been cleared of the last of the fascist invaders.

ALBANIA AND THE POST-WAR WORLD

Chapter Eight

Results of the War in Albania; Relations with Britain and other countries; The Struggle against Yugoslavia

Albania made a considerable contribution to the Allied victory over the fascist powers – in proportion to its size, a tremendous contribution. During the patriotic war Albania kept pinned down 100,000 Italian and 70,000 German soldiers. The National Liberation Army inflicted on these two invading forces casualties of 26,594 killed, 21,245 wounded and some 20,000 captured – thus eliminating from the war more than 68,600 officers and men. Over 2,000 tanks and armoured cars were captured or destroyed; more than 4,000 cannon, mortars and machine guns were wrested from the enemy for the use of partisans and upwards of 200 arms depots were blown up.

These serious blows against the enemy were not inflicted without great losses to the Albanian people. Counting only those whose deaths were directly due to enemy action there were 28,000 killed or over 2½% of the population. In proportion to its size Albania lost in the war three times as many people as Britain and 17 times as many as the United States. In military losses 11,000 partisans were killed in action or 1% of the population. Only the Soviet Union had a higher percentage of people wounded, and 44,500 Albanians were imprisoned or deported.

Material damage was also staggering. More than a third of all habitations and, indeed, of all buildings of any kind, were totally destroyed. More than a third of the livestock was butchered or stolen and the same proportion of fruit trees and vineyards had been ruined. Nearly all the mines, ports, roads and especially bridges were wrecked, and not a single industrial plant was in working order.

But in spite of these losses Albania came out of the war with certain very great advantages for facing the problems ahead. For the first time in history the Albanian people enjoyed an independence which could not be taken from them because they had won it themselves without any outside help. And as a people they were united as never before and would be able to bring to the formidable tasks of restoring and developing their country the same unity which had enabled them to defeat vastly superior enemies. The people's war which had freed them from external aggression had also lifted from their backs the internal oppression of reactionary forces which could have made their victory hollow. Albania had more than its share of heroes and martyrs in the anti-fascist war but unlike so many other countries they did not die in vain.

Travelling about the country today one finds everywhere records of the epic struggle of the Albanian people. Each town has its monuments to local heroes and heroines and its revolutionary museum to keep fresh the memory of the sacrifice of a whole generation to secure Albania's national independence and socialist future. They do not intend to forget the cost of freedom and every achievement in creating a prosperous and just society is a tribute to those who fought to set Albania on its present course.

The determination to defend their hard-won freedom and the social unity forged in the heat of struggle were to be challenged, both by Albania's two nearest neighbours and by Britain and the United States, even before the last shot in the liberation war was fired. To appreciate the foundations of this unity and how it was fostered in the early days of the People's Republic thus provides a key to the understanding of Albania's immediate post-war history.

As has been shown, the Communist Party demonstrated its capacity for leadership of the liberation movement by uniting all the patriotic and anti-fascist forces of the country in a single National Liberation Front. This Front included the working class, poor and middle peasants, the small city bourgeoisie, patriotic intellectuals and even some national bourgeoisie who had already before the war been threatened with annihilation by foreign capital. The peasantry, as by far

the largest section of the population in a country where 87% of the people were engaged in agriculture, was the largest social grouping in the Liberation Front and the principal source of recruitment for the Liberation Army. The political basis of the Front was the alliance between peasants and working class, with the working class as the main directing force in the whole coalition of classes mobilised in the resistance.

The working class at the beginning of the war was very small, totalling only about 15,000 or 13% of the population. It was also inexperienced since there had not been enough development of industry for an industrialised proletariat, tempered in class struggle with employers, to have come into being. However, from 1941 workers had their own Marxist-Leninist party – the Albanian Communist Party, subsequently named the Party of Labour of Albania. A Marxist-Leninist party represents the distilled experience of workers generally in the revolutionary struggle to emancipate themselves and in doing so to end all forms of exploitation. The Albanian working class matured and grew in size under the leadership of a Marxist-Leninist party and was thus equipped almost from its beginnings with a correct proletarian ideology. The interests of any exploiting class are necessarily exclusive while the interests of the working class, including in the Albanian situation, not only national independence but also the elimination of exploitation in a genuine popular democracy, could embrace the real interests of peasants, petty bourgeoisie and intellectuals.

To win these other sections and classes for an alliance with the working class the first stage of the Albanian revolution was limited to just those goals which all patriotic forces could support – the defeat of the invaders and the vesting of state power in the people among whom the working class played a leading but not controlling role. The second stage, distinct but not separate from the first, would begin when these goals had been achieved and would carry the revolution on to the building of socialism under the dictatorship of the working class which alone can bar any return of capitalist exploitation. But by this stage the working class would not only be much more experienced but also would have increased its

numbers by all the peasants and other sections of the population who had become proletarianised through their service as partisans under the leadership of a workers' party. A working class under the direct guidance of its own Marxist-Leninist party ceases to be simply a class-*in*-itself and acquires the political consciousness which makes it a class-*for*-itself with its own ideology – the ideology of socialism as opposed to the ideology of capitalism. Peasants, intellectuals and others who, through such experience as a liberation war under Marxist-Leninist leadership, adopt the ideology of the working class effectively swell its ranks.

The Communist Party rallied around it all who were prepared to resist and since the Liberation War left no corner of Albania untouched, however remote, all sections of society were forced sooner or later to declare themselves. There was no middle ground between patriotic forces and out-and-out collaborators, and most of the latter who had not been dealt with by partisans in the course of the war fled with the retreating fascist troops. Religious leaders of the three faiths in Albania, predominantly Muslim but with some Roman Catholicism in the north and Greek Orthodoxy in the south, had also, for the most part, collaborated with either the Italian or German invaders, and they, too, left the country, or, if they remained, were largely discredited in the eyes of their erstwhile flocks.

A distinction within Albanian society which western commentators emphasise, between the 'Ghegs' of the feudal north and the 'Tosks' of the south where bourgeois influence from Italy and other parts of Europe had been stronger, was weakened during the struggle in which north and south were united. As the people's democracy after the war began sweeping away the remnants of both feudal *and* bourgeois social customs and habits, this difference, which no longer had a class basis anyway, tended to disappear altogether. The Albanian people came out of the war with a unity few nations can have enjoyed. They were going to need it.

British imperialism's interest in Albania dates back to 1924 when Zog's invasion of Albania had the backing of certain British firms hoping to exploit the country's mineral wealth. During the war members of the British military mission to

Albania had to be expelled for plotting with collaborators; but the British Government under the premiership of Churchill or Attlee, did not give up the idea of controlling this strategically important corner of the Mediterranean area by having Zog reinstated as King. When post-war elections were being held throughout Albania on December 2, 1945, the British Government proposed to put observers in the country to oversee the voting. The Albanians assured the British that they also knew how to count.

In that same year the British navy, without any consultation, began clearing mines from Albanian waters, ignoring the protest of the Albanian Government. No Albanian representative was allowed on the Mediterranean Zone Mine Clearance Board and the British even called in Greek mine-clearing vessels to operate in Albania's territorial waters in spite of the strained relations between Greece and Albania. When the Albanian Government objected, Ernest Bevin, Britain's foreign secretary, used what he called the uncooperative attitude of the Albanians as an excuse for declaring in April, 1946, 'that His Majesty's Government have decided that no useful purpose can be served by opening diplomatic relations with them'.

On May 15 the British cruisers Orion and Superb steamed through the Corfu channel, coming within hailing distance of the Albanian shore and appearing to head right into the harbour of Saranda. Warning shots were fired from the coastal batteries. The British Government demanded an apology and an assurance that those responsible had been severely punished. The reply from the Albanian Government was not an apology but an explanation. Greek ships on several occasions had attacked the Albanian coast and foreign warships could not be permitted within Albania's three mile limit without prior information of such an intention. While it was true that the Corfu channel was an international waterway, this had been established when Albania was unable to assert its legitimate rights. Britain retorted that Albania would *not* be informed when ships of the British navy chose to use the channel, however close this might bring them to the Albanian shore, and if they were fired upon they would fire back.

On October 22 British warships left Corfu for Argostoli and, under orders to be ready to open up if fired upon, went out of their way to test Albanian reactions. Two of the ships, the Saumarez and the Volage, hit mines involving the loss of both ships and the lives of 40 seamen.

Enver Hoxha complained to the Secretary General of the United Nations about British ships entering Albania's territorial waters and British aircraft flying over Albanian soil. 'Three times the British Government has callously violated our sovereignty. We have done everything in our power to bring about cordial relations with the United States and Britain. . . . All we get for our pains is an utter disregard of our rights and an unending stream of diplomatic notes.'

Meanwhile the British navy set about trying to collect proof that Albania was responsible for the mining of the two ships. The mines in the channel turned out to be German. The one country in the whole Mediterranean area possessing neither mines, mine-layers nor personnel trained in handling mines was Albania. Nevertheless Britain accused Albania of full responsibility and demanded reparations equal to the value of the two ships and compensation for the dependants of the killed and injured sailors. Otherwise the matter would be raised in the Security Council.

When Britain did raise the matter, the only evidence for the charge was their contention that the mines looked too fresh to have been in the water more than six months. But in the developing Cold War situation the Western Powers decided that the British case was proved and the Soviet Union had to veto the granting of the reparations Britain demanded.

The case was then referred to the International Court at the Hague, Hysni Kapo, the great partisan leader and by that time a prominent member of the Albanian Party and Government, opposed the charges, arguing that on such meagre evidence Albania had no case to answer. Eventually, in April, 1949, the Court promulgated its decision. Britain had not violated international law in respect to territorial waters on the date the ships were mined, but it had violated international law in the course of trying to collect evidence in the same waters afterwards! The British claim for damages

was granted and Albania was ordered to pay £843,947. Albania, of course, ignored the demand.

Indeed it became a popular joke in Estrada performances, a kind of Albanian music hall, that a country with no navy, which had not stirred beyond its own frontiers, had managed to inflict a million pounds worth of damage on the great British fleet!

Albania did not pay the award, but neither has it ever received back one ounce of the gold bullion stored by the Albanian National Bank in trans-Atlantic vaults at the outbreak of the war.

The United States and British Governments were unable to reconcile themselves to Albania's slipping away from the 'free world' – that is, the world free for the operations of Anglo-American monopoly capitalism. The most serious attempt to subvert the popular Government in Albania and restore a reactionary regime sympathetic to Anglo-American interests was a cloak-and-dagger operation initiated in 1946 by the British Secret Intelligence Service, MI6. The scheme was to recruit a force of agents from the collaborators and traitors who had escaped from the country with the Germans at the end of the war and parachute them into an area of central Albania, the Mati, where there were supposed to be elements still loyal to Zog. These elements were to be organised into counter-revolutionary groups which the British would supply by air-drops. If full-scale civil disturbance could be provoked, then an invasion force would be landed at various points on the coast.

The first batch of agents was raised from displaced person camps in Greece and Italy and from the ranks of those who had accompanied Zog into exile before the war began, their one qualification being the virulence of their anti-communism. They were taken to Malta for training and, throughout 1947, dropped among the mountains of the Mati. It was like dropping pebbles in a bottomless well as far as the SIS was concerned. The operation continued in a sporadic manner until 1949 with no results apart from several easily-frustrated sabotage attempts on the oil fields of Kuçova and the copper mines of Rubik.

At that point the Americans became interested in the

project which was thenceforth placed under the joint control of the Secret Intelligence Service and the Central Intelligence Agency. Ernest Bevin was at first reluctant to agree to the massive stepping up of a scheme which had thus far proved so abortive; but American pressure soon persuaded him to authorise another operation on a much larger scale. This time Zog was asked to recommend personally the right men to serve as leaders and he put his entire royal guard at the disposal of the SIS and the CIA. Committees of 'Free Albania' were set up in Italy, Egypt and Greece as recruiting centres and gradually a small army of fanatic anti-communists, professional adventurers and criminals was scraped together and sent for training to Cyprus, Malta or West Germany. For the next two years groups of agents were dropped by parachute, landed by submarine or filtered across the Albanian frontier.

The whole operation was a series of disasters for the British and Americans. In January, 1952, in one battle with agents dropped in the north, Albanian security forces killed 29 and captured the rest who were sent to Tirana for trial. Armed peasants and mountaineers were on the look out for these enemies of the national freedom so hardly won and they were quickly rounded up and handed over to the state authorities for trial and punishment. In an attempt to find out why things were going so badly the leader of the Albanian mercenaries was dropped into the country with a radio operator, to be followed by a major drop of agents when he signalled the all-clear. He was captured by the Albanian militia and forced to transmit a message that the way was clear for the rest to be dropped. Units of the Albanian army waited in a large circle and the British planes flew over and unloaded scores of their agents in the middle of the ring. The leaders were sentenced to be shot and the others were imprisoned. So ended that particular plot of British and American Intelligence.

The head of the British side of the Albanian operation and, indeed, their chief liaison officer with the Central Intelligence Agency was Kim Philby. It may be that, as often as possible, he was getting word to the Albanians by way of the Soviet Union when they could expect their next consignment of

secret agents from the SIS and CIA. Western commentators like to pretend that the whole fiasco was the work of this Soviet spy. The reason why the scheme never had the slightest chance of succeeding was that the Albanian people were much too closely united behind the leadership which had brought them victoriously through the war and much too vigilant in the defence of their freedom for a bunch of hired saboteurs and gangsters to be able to cause much trouble. These are the obvious facts about a country which the intelligence services of Britain and America with all their men in the field equipped with all the latest paraphernalia never seem to be able to find out.

The official attitude of Britain and the United States to Albania was as unfriendly as their secret operations. In spite of war time undertakings to accept whatever government the people of Albania themselves should choose, Britain and the United States both refused to recognise the government of the People's Republic of Albania and neither country has thus far established relations of any kind with it. They excluded Albania from the San Francisco Conference that founded the United Nations and from the London and Paris Conferences on war reparations from Italy and Germany. Nor was Albania invited to take part in discussions on drafting a peace treaty with Italy. They tried to bar Albania altogether from the Peace Conference which began in July 1946. Only through the insistence of the Soviet Union was the Albanian delegation, headed by Enver Hoxha, finally admitted as representing an allied country. During the Conference the Albanians had to reply frequently to attacks on their country which the Greek government, backed by the United States and Britain, intended to further its claim to large areas of Albanian territory. Before leaving for home Enver Hoxha solemnly warned the meeting that 'neither the Paris Conference, nor the Four Power Conference, nor any other conference whatsoever, can take up for discussion the boundaries of my country, within which not even an inch of foreign land is included. Our boundaries are indisputable and nobody will dare violate them. . . . Let the whole world know that the Albanian people have not sent their delegation to Paris to render account, but to demand that an account

should be rendered to them by those who have caused them so much damage and against whom the Albanian people have fought so fiercely to the end'.

At about this time the United States Senate passed unanimously the Pepper Resolution which favoured Greece's claim to the whole of southern Albania. Some time later, in 1949, Greek armed forces, supported by artillery and aircraft, suddenly invaded Albania to try to establish by force the claim to Korça and Gjirokastra. They had advanced less than a mile when they were thrown back by the Albanian army.

The hostility of Albania's neighbour to the south was to be expected since a right wing government had been imposed on the Greek people, with the help of Britain and the United States, for the express purpose of opposing communism. Relations with Yugoslavia might have been supposed to develop in a much more cordial way. Certainly Albania did everything possible to foster the friendliest relationship with this country which had shared a common experience in the anti-fascist war. And yet the gravest threat of all to Albanian independence in the immediate post-war period came precisely from Yugoslavia.

When the last German troops were driven from Albania in November, 1944, the National Liberation Army did not consider that the war was over simply because their own land was liberated from the enemy. On the orders of the Commander-in-Chief, Enver Hoxha, and at the request of the Yugoslav army command, the Third and Fifth Albanian Brigades crossed into Yugoslavia and engaged the Nazi troops around Kosova which they liberated. They were then joined by the Twenty-fifth Brigade and all three were incorporated in the Fifth Division which inflicted heavy casualties on the German troops in the Sandjak region and advanced as far north as Priepolje which they also liberated.

Elements of the Sixth Division also crossed the frontier and pursued the enemy toward Podgorica, liberating Tuzi in a bloody battle on December 2. Right through severe winter conditions for which their own campaign of the previous winter had hardened them, the Albanian partisans fought on Yugoslav soil, driving the Germans out of Montenegro and

freeing many villages in Bosnia and Herzegovina up to the city of Vishegrad in whose liberation they joined with Yugoslav partisans.

In spite of the rigours of winter in a foreign land the Albanians went short of food themselves rather than allow the Yugoslav peasants to go hungry in expressing their friendship and admiration for their southern neighbours who had come up to take part in their struggle. As a Yugoslav mother in Senica said of the Albanians killed in freeing another land: 'Tell the mothers, wives and sisters of those who laid down their lives for the liberation of the Sandjak, that the sun of our mountains will warm the place where their loved ones fell, just as the sun of their mountains. That the spot where they lie will be revered by us with the same feelings as they would have'.

Nor did Albania's assistance stop with this participation in the final phase of Yugoslavia's liberation. There are a million Albanians living within the frontiers of Yugoslavia in the Kosova district and they expected that new boundaries of Albania would be drawn in such a way as to include them once more in their native land. The Albanian Government urged them to remain as they were, continuing to be good citizens of Yugoslavia, since this problem like any others could surely be solved by two countries in both of which the people had taken power.

But the chauvinism renounced by Albania was to characterise all the actions of the Tito regime toward its southern neighbour, and it soon became apparent that the Yugoslav Government had no other plans for its relations with Albania than to incorporate it as a seventh province in the Yugoslavian federation. These plans could not be carried out if the two peoples were linked in friendship based on common experiences in the anti-fascist war and common aspirations for the future. Yugoslav party and state officials began to minimise the contribution of the Albanians to the victory over the common enemy and any reference to their participation finally dropped out of Yugoslav accounts of the period altogether.

Interference of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia in the internal affairs of the Communist Party of Albania began as

early as the Second Plenary session of the Albanian Party at Berat in November, 1944, on the eve of Albania's liberation. The session was intended to take up the tasks which would confront a liberated Albania; but Enver Hoxha suddenly found himself having to defend the line of the Party and, indeed, the whole conduct of the war against charges levelled by the Yugoslav delegation under the leadership of Velimir Stoinich who was acting on the direct instructions of Tito. The Albanian Party was accused of having 'vacillated between sectarianism and opportunism' and Enver Hoxha was criticised as the source of these errors. The liberation movement in Albania was said to owe its success almost entirely to aid and advice from the Communist Party of Yugoslavia and the leadership of the whole Balkan struggle by Tito.

Such an attack would have been ridiculed if the way for it had not been carefully prepared. Certain important members of the Albanian Party like Koçi Xoxe, of the Political Bureau, who with Enver Hoxha had been a member of the Korça group even before the foundation of the Party, and Sejfulla Malëshova, a candidate member of the Central Committee, had already been won over to the line of the Yugoslav Party on Albania's future. This line as advanced by Stoinich and strongly supported by some members high in the counsels of the Albanian Party itself, was based on the contention that Albania was too small and too weak to stand on its own after the war. It could only be a 'tempting morsel' for the imperialist powers. Therefore it was necessary, internally, for the Albanian Government to broaden itself by including influential representatives of the reactionary bourgeoisie and even important members of the clergy, whatever role they had played during the war, and postpone indefinitely any idea of carrying out the socialist revolution. And, externally, Albania must agree to join the Yugoslav federation as a step toward the complete fusion of the two countries, the symbol of such union being Tito 'the great liberator of the Balkans and of Europe'.

In addition to those members of the Albanian Party who worked actively on behalf of the Yugoslav plot against the interests of Albania, like Koçi Xoxe and Sejfulla Malëshova,

the latter even proposing with himself in mind the need for a Party Chairman over Enver Hoxha's head, there were many who were simply confused about the issues. They were doubtful about the possibility of a country the size of Albania being able to maintain its own independence and build socialism relying on its own efforts. They could not believe that the leadership of the Yugoslav Party, calling itself Marxist-Leninist, could be motivated by the sort of chauvinism characteristic of imperialist powers or could, indeed, actually enter into arrangements with the imperialist powers as the price of economic aid. Such were Nako Spiru and other members of the Central Committee who agreed that sectarianism was the principal danger in the Party and decided to enlarge the Central Committee by adding new members sympathetic to the line of class collaboration and closer association with Yugoslavia.

The meeting at Berat dealt a serious blow to the unity of the Communist Party of Albania and introduced the threat of a retreat from socialist principles and collusion with capitalist countries, increasingly the policy of the Yugoslav Party and leadership. But the plot failed in one of its main aims which was to depose Enver Hoxha as Secretary General, and this was to prove fatal to any ultimate chance of success. Many members of the Central Committee might be confused about the problems of Albania's future course, but they had no doubts about the correct leadership of Enver Hoxha in founding the Albanian Communist Party and guiding the liberation struggle to victory. They could not be shifted from their support by the attack of the Yugoslav delegation and the Titoites in the Central Committee. Enver Hoxha remained in a position to go on defending resolutely a Marxist-Leninist line for the Party and a socialist path for the country.

During the next two years, 1945 to 1947, Tito continued to use pressure from within and without to reduce Albania to the status of dependency on Belgrade under cover of 'strengthening friendly relations'. In this he was able to exploit the position within the Albanian Party of Koçi Xoxe who had become deputy premier and secretary of the Central Committee. Economic and political conventions concluded

between the two countries ostensibly for their mutual benefit were not very different from the commercial agreements Italy had imposed on Albania before the war. Revaluing the Albanian lek in terms of the Yugoslav dinar, establishing a customs union and subordinating Albania's economic plan to Yugoslavia's, were all used by the Yugoslav leadership to tighten their grip on Albania and prepare the way for its total incorporation.

The good relations Albania enjoyed with the Soviet Union during this period were of great help to Enver Hoxha and all who were determined to maintain the country's independence from Belgrade. Stalin was well aware of Tito's intentions and advised the Albanians accordingly. Why was Yugoslavia so keen on forming joint industrial companies in Albania, he asked pointedly, when they refused to form them with the Soviet Union in their own country? Why were they sending instructors to the Albanian army when they still needed Soviet instructors in their own? How could Yugoslavia provide experts for the development of Albania's economy when they were themselves seeking such experts from abroad? How was it that Yugoslavia, itself poor and undeveloped, suddenly intended to assume the development of Albania?

In June 1946 Enver Hoxha submitted to the Political Bureau a special report on the need to re-examine the proceedings of the Second Plenum of the Central Committee at Berat in 1944. He pointed out that the conclusions reached then were erroneous and seriously encroached on the independence of the Albanian Party. This report was opposed in the Political Bureau by Koçi Xoxe and Pandi Kristo who managed to get it rejected.

By 1947, under the guise of a treaty of mutual assistance, Yugoslav plans were well advanced for a military coup to take over strategic points when the time was ripe. In June the Central Committee of the Yugoslav Party made a vicious attack on Enver Hoxha accusing him of pursuing an individualistic, anti-Marxist line hostile to Yugoslavia and against the interests of Albania itself. In July an Albanian delegation headed by Enver Hoxha concluded an agreement in Moscow for the supply of agricultural machinery. The

Yugoslav leadership stated that Albania could enter into no relations with other countries without Yugoslavia's approval and demanded to see copies of the agreement. Later that year Koçi Xoxe tried to prevent Enver Hoxa from signing a treaty of friendship with Bulgaria. Albania must be kept isolated to facilitate its absorption into Yugoslavia.

In November Nako Spiru who had recognised his mistakes at Berat and had come around to firm support of Enver Hoxha was charged by the Xoxe clique with having collaborated with the enemy during the war. The false charge together with the realisation of the harm he had done previously to Party unity was too much for Nako Spiru and he committed suicide. Mehmet Shehu, who had never wavered in his correct stand with Enver Hoxha, was prevented from attending the Party meeting convened in February, 1948, and also excluded from the Central Committee by Koçi Xoxe who was using his position as organising secretary to isolate Enver Hoxha.

This February meeting was the culmination of the Yugoslav plot. Enver Hoxha was accused of leading a faction which was responsible for all the mistakes the Communist Party had allegedly made. Tito's accusations of the previous year were formally adopted and all the economic and political ties with Yugoslavia for the colonisation of Albania were agreed.

After this meeting Koçi Xoxe's group pressed on as rapidly as possible with putting the Yugoslav scheme into effect. They used their position to place the state security organs above the Party and began eliminating those members who opposed the scheme. A special control commission arrived from Belgrade to integrate the Albanian economy with that of Yugoslavia. As the final step in implementing Albania's outright annexation, Koçi Xoxe put forward Tito's demand that the Soviet military mission be expelled and that several divisions of the Yugoslav army should be brought into Albania to ward off the danger of a Greek attack.

Enver Hoxha resolutely opposed these demands in the Central Committee and got them rejected. This decision saved Albania from once more having to take up arms against an occupying army and was the beginning of the exposure

and defeat of the Yugoslav agents within the country who had plotted against Albanian independence. There could no longer be the slightest doubt about Yugoslav intentions and Enver Hoxha's insistence on the need for Albanian self-reliance if the country was to develop in a socialist way had been completely vindicated by events. With the Party and people behind him Enver Hoxha went over to the attack. On Tito's birthday in May, 1948, there were no greetings from Albania. Three weeks later Yugoslavia was ordered to close its information centre in Tirana and the circulation of the Yugoslav Party paper, *Borba*, which had waged a continuous campaign against Enver Hoxha's correct line, was banned in Albania.

Stalin was kept informed of Yugoslavia's moves against Albania — particularly the proposal to send troops into the country. The Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union promptly sent a letter to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia condemning its opportunist line which was leading to the restoration of capitalism, its violation of socialist norms in the inner life of the Party and the arrogance and conceit of the leadership. The Albanian Party which had rallied behind Enver Hoxha's leadership against Yugoslav intervention, was soon to have its principled stand against a revisionist conspiracy endorsed by the world communist movement.

When Koçi Xoxe realised that the plot against Albanian sovereignty had failed, he quickly changed his line and came out himself with an attack on Tito. But this sudden about turn fooled no one. He was expelled from the Party, arrested and brought to trial. Found guilty of crimes against the state and people he was executed. The public exposure of this Titoist agent had the effect of alerting other East European countries to the same danger since Albania, though the most directly threatened, was not the only socialist country in whose internal affairs Tito had interfered.

The attempt by the Yugoslav leadership under Tito to take over Albania illustrated the distinction Lenin always made between the nationalism of an oppressor nation and the nationalism of an oppressed nation. The nationalism which had inspired the people of Yugoslavia to fight the German

occupation forces and become part of the international revolutionary movement was transformed by Tito, not without resistance from within, to chauvinism which could be directed against a smaller nation in order to make it a 'Seventh Republic' in a Greater Yugoslavia. This could not have happened if Tito had committed Yugoslavia to the task of building socialism because no socialist country which eliminates exploitation within its own borders can absorb another country for the purpose of exploiting it without denying its own nature.

In fact Tito had the distinction of being the first 'communist' leader enjoying state power to betray socialism by taking a revisionist line. Revisionism as a distortion of Marxism fatal to revolutionary advance had long existed as an erroneous trend in various communist parties. Lenin had waged a bitter controversy against this line as exemplified by Bernstein, who was influenced by the social democratic ideas of the British Fabians, and Kautsky, who had degenerated from a Marxist theoretician into a hostile critic of the October Revolution. Revisionism can be described as the betrayal of class struggle. Beginning with the assumption of the possibility of peaceful transition to socialism by parliamentary means, 'socialism without tears', and of peaceful coexistence with imperialist countries, even on the part of the very countries they exploit, revisionism ends in accepting capitalism internally and submitting to imperialism externally. Revisionism had up to that time been *non*-revolutionary, preventing certain communist parties from attacking capitalism or from leading anti-imperialist struggles in colonial countries. Tito's revisionism was *counter*-revolutionary, restoring capitalism where the bourgeoisie had been overthrown and making Yugoslavia an agent of imperialist interests in Eastern Europe when it had once belonged to the socialist bloc.

From 1944 till 1948 the Albanian Party and people, increasingly united under Enver Hoxha's leadership, were in the front line of the struggle against Tito's betrayal of socialism. They had friendly advice and assistance from Stalin and the Soviet Party; but it was their country which was under direct attack and in fighting to preserve their own independence and the right to develop their own socialist

society they were defending, almost alone in this instance, the cause of socialism generally. Indeed, the last tense meeting between Stalin and the Yugoslav representatives before the expulsion of Yugoslavia from the socialist camp was largely concerned with Tito's actions against Albania.

In the summer of 1948 representatives of the world communist and workers' parties participating in the Information Bureau of Communist Parties made an analysis of the errors and deviations of the Yugoslav leaders and published their findings in Bucharest. The Resolution agreed by the Bureau was circulated 'to improve the ideological, theoretical and political work in the parties, to safe-guard socialist achievements in countries where the working class had established its rule, to protect the socialist camp and consolidate revolutionary forces throughout the world and to intensify the struggle against imperialism and prevent imperialist agents from penetrating any further into the people's democracies'. The leaders of the Yugoslav Communist Party were charged with having abandoned internationalism and adopted a course of narrow national self-interest. 'They apparently do not understand,' the Resolution pointed out, 'or pretend they do not understand, that such a nationalist orientation may only lead to the degeneration of Yugoslavia into an ordinary bourgeois republic, to the loss of its independence, to the transformation of Yugoslavia into a colony of the imperialist countries.'

The Yugoslav leadership rejected the Resolution and Tito moved further away from Marxism and closer to open collaboration with the United States. This betrayal for dollars of the interests of the workers and peasants was not carried through without resistance; and thousands of members were expelled from the Yugoslav Communist Party. Nearly all those in certain provincial governments like Montenegro were jailed and a large proportion of commanders and commissars of the old partisan brigades were imprisoned or discharged from the army. The Albanians living within Yugoslavia's borders at Kosovo, in Montenegro and on the Dukagjin Plateau were subjected to special acts of repression. Attempts to maintain their Albanian language and culture were frustrated and under the oppressive acts of the government

they became a source of cheap, menial labour and, in some cases, of agents who could be sent back into Albania for subversive purposes. The treaty signed by Yugoslavia under United States instigation in 1953 with Greece and Turkey linked in a hostile ring the past and present enemies of Albanian independence.

The Albanian Communist Party, of course, warmly approved the Resolution of the Information Bureau which was a justification of their own stand and of Enver Hoxha's leadership. At a Party meeting in September, 1948, all the agreements with Yugoslavia were abrogated and the task of purging the remnants of Titoist influence from their own ranks were carried out. Mehmet Shehu and other members unjustly excluded from the previous session were welcomed back and various violations of socialist legality by the Xoxe group were repudiated. Nako Spiru's name was cleared of the charges that had been made against him. Party organisations were charged with the responsibility of making clear to the people the nature of the Yugoslav plot and the weaknesses in the Albanian Party which had allowed it to go so far. Publication of the Party paper, Zeri i Popullit, which had lapsed during the height of Yugoslav influence, was to be recommenced and was to include, for the first time, all the decisions taken during this Eleventh Party Plenum. And, finally, preparations were made for the first full Party Congress in November which, having made a thorough investigation of the mistakes which had enabled their ranks to be penetrated and having heard the self-criticisms of those who had failed in vigilance, would be able to go on to a consideration of the vital tasks of constructing the socialist base of society. It was agreed that at this Congress the name of the Party would be changed to the Albanian Party of Labour while the Marxist-Leninist line of the Party would be confirmed and strengthened.

While this first severe crisis of the new state of Albania may have delayed somewhat the country's embarking on a correct socialist course and even allowed errors to develop during the period of Yugoslav influence – like the Party's remaining a semi-secret organisation when it had become a Party in power or like the concessions made to rich peasants

which impeded the formation of agricultural co-operatives, there were important gains too. Party and people could go forward in the confidence of enjoying a leadership which had proved itself under the most testing circumstances. And had it not been for the bitter experience of revisionist betrayal which could turn a war-time ally into a counter-revolutionary agent of the imperialist countries, the Albanian people could not have recognised so quickly a far more dangerous and powerful revisionist threat which was to develop after Stalin's death.

ALBANIA'S SOCIALIST SOCIETY

Chapter Nine

The State

The real question of politics is who rules whom, who enjoys state power and how is that power maintained. The essential political problem of a socialist society is that of vesting real state power in the hands of the masses of people in town and countryside, headed by the working class, and *keeping it there.* A socialist society is not simply created *for* the working masses; it must be created and preserved *by* the working masses. If this does not continue to be the case, state and society will soon degenerate from socialism into some form of capitalism with a consequent restoration of exploitative relations of production.

The Constitution of the People's Republic of Albania, adopted on March 14, 1946, by the Constituent Assembly brought into being by the first democratic election ever held, is short, straightforward and democratic in the fullest sense. The whole document of fewer than a hundred articles takes up only 40 pages of a very small book. This conciseness and simplicity stem from the fact that, unlike most constitutions, there are no ruling class interests to be concealed in elaborate verbiage, no complicated divisions of power to check the state's interference in business and finance, no pseudo-democratic formulations designed to give people the illusion of governing themselves. It is worthwhile setting out the basic structure of Albanian governmental institutions; but the test which has to be applied in judging their efficacy is whether the people, the working masses, really are in control of their own social destiny. This can only be demonstrated concretely by examples drawn from every aspect of the life of the people and from the very quality of that life in the broadest sense.

The very first proclamation of the Albanian Party of Labour, issued in 1941, set before the communist membership and the people of Albania the task not only of liberating the country but of investing political power in the working masses. This double task was reflected in the twofold responsibility of the freely-elected National Liberation Councils as both mobilising centres of the armed struggle and popular organisations of the new revolutionary governing power established on the ruins of the occupational régime of the invaders and the pre-war régime of the old exploiting classes.

People's power as embodied in the Albanian Constitution was not, therefore, grafted on to the institutions of pre-war society nor even developed as a radical modification of them. It was established after a clean sweep in which the whole governmental apparatus of the old ruling class had been brushed aside. This was the lesson Marx had drawn from the experience of the Paris Commune – that it was not enough for the working class to lay hold of the state machine of the bourgeoisie: they must smash it and create their own organs of proletarian power.

All the major democratic organisations which enable the Albanian working masses to exercise state power originated and developed in the heat of national struggle. As they came into being in answer to the national need they were tested in the fires of the liberation war involving the whole people. Out of the National Liberation General Council grew the People's Assembly; and the National Liberation Committee appointed by the Council became the Government, Prime Minister and Cabinet, elected by the Assembly. The National Liberation Councils at village, district and city levels developed into the People's Councils which are the local organs of state power.

The National Liberation Front, set up at Peza in 1942, as a mass organisation including all those, regardless of ideological, regional or religious differences, who were prepared to join in the anti-fascist war under the leadership of the General Council, diversified into various mass organisations such as the Democratic Front, the Trade Unions, the Labour Youth Union, the Albanian Women's Union and other

voluntary groupings. The entire legislative action of the government is carried on with the active participation of these mass organisations in one or more of which all workers find a place. Indeed the fundamental law of the Albanian State Constitution was only approved after the most meticulous examination by workers organised in these mass fronts.

The general framework of government is democratically based on the mass organisations, but what animates the entire structure, gives life to all these institutions of popular rule and provides a direction for Albanian society as a whole is the Party. It is the responsibility of the Albanian Party of Labour to keep socialist politics, the politics of working class leadership in command of all aspects of development. However democratic the Constitution as formulated, the only guarantee against the growth of bureaucracy and the formation of a new class of exploiters is the Party. The Party is the social conscience of the working class.

The Albanian state is the governmental expression of working class rule — the dictatorship of the proletariat, which simply means complete democracy for the working masses and violent opposition to their enemies. No other form of state can build socialism and prevent the restoration of capitalism. The dictatorship of the proletariat is essential for expropriating the possessions of the exploiters and liquidating private property which is the source of exploitation. It is also essential for protecting the victories of the socialist revolution from enemies inside and outside the country.

The Government which came into being after the first real democratic elections on December 2, 1945, enacted a series of measures of a socialist, that is to say, anti-capitalist and anti-feudalist character. All the unequal agreements contracted with other countries by former regimes were abrogated. The property of foreign capitalists and war criminals was confiscated. The agrarian reform laws based on the principle of 'land to the tiller' redistributed the holdings of big landlords. All industrial plants and mines were nationalised without compensation creating a new socialist sector in the economy. Foreign trade and the production and distribution of the industrial output were brought under state

control. Legislation was passed on conditions of work, length of the working day and paid holidays which amounted to a charter of emancipation for the working masses.

At the same time the working class under Party leadership and the broad masses of the people were mobilised to defend the socialist state from threatened invasion by its immediate neighbours and from the aggressive intentions of the imperialist powers, taking the form either of direct armed intervention or of subversion through reactionary elements inside the country.

Class struggle does not cease even after the liquidation of the exploiting classes. It simply takes different forms as the battle between the ideas, customs and habits of the old exploitative society and the ideals and aspirations of the new socialist man is fought out in every sphere of social activity. As long as there exist any groups inside the country interested in the restoration of capitalism, as long as there exist imperialist countries anxious to overthrow the socialist order by open or hidden aggression, as long as there exists the Trojan Horse of revisionism, the state of the proletarian dictatorship remains a necessity if a country like Albania is to remain socialist.

Class struggle transcends state boundaries and appears on the international scene as the struggle between capitalist and socialist countries and between imperialist and colonial or neo-colonial countries. Albania plays its part in this gigantic conflict, not only defending its own liberty but actively participating in the progress of human society generally. The socialist state has the function of strengthening ties of fraternal friendship with countries based on the same socialist principles and of supporting everywhere the revolutionary national liberation movements against imperialist oppression.

For Albania to remain socialist, defend itself and play a constructive role in international affairs the state requires the direct participation of the people – the working class, the co-operative peasantry and the popular intelligentsia constituting very nearly the whole of society. Not only do the working people own the means of production, they must actively direct economic, cultural and political development. The socialist state cannot even be conceived apart from this

direct participation of the masses and the Constitution is designed to insure that such participation occurs at every level and in every department of government. It has already led to the discovery of talented organisers among the workers and peasants whose abilities have strengthened the state apparatus in the service of the people.

The process by which the people have the fullest opportunity of expressing their will freely on every aspect of social development and this expression is then co-ordinated by the government in decisions which are fed back to the people for implementation is called democratic centralism. Democratic centralism is not only the organisational principle of the state apparatus of the People's Republic of Albania, it is also the organisational principle of every representational body associated with the state apparatus and the Albanian Party of Labour itself. The centralisation of the socialist state is not a concentration of state functions in an interdependent bureaucratic complex, nor is its link with democratic practice limited to a periodic electoral mandate from the people. It is a continuous process of the democratisation of every legislative and executive act of government according to the fundamental socialist rule of the mass line – from the masses, to the masses. Democratic centralism is the organisational form of this fundamental mass line which Mao Tsetung has described as the socialist necessity to 'go to the masses and learn from them, synthesise their experience into better articulated principles and methods, then do propaganda among the masses, and call upon them to put these principles and methods into practice so as to solve their problems and help them achieve liberation and happiness'. It is to encourage this social process which is repeated over and over again with respect to all the specific economic and political responsibilities of the socialist state that democratic centralism has been established as the operational basis of government.

One check on undemocratic procedures is the obligation of the state to observe socialist legality as set out in the Constitution – rigorously and unconditionally. The Constitution fixes the competence of the various state organs and insures the supremacy of the popularly elected People's

Assembly which is the source of all juridical norms regulating the most important relations of social life.

Every citizen having completed eighteen years of age, regardless of sex, economic status, social position, religious belief or any other consideration, enjoys the right to elect and be elected to any elective body in the state. Electors vote directly for their representatives whether as members of a village council, as people's judges or as deputies of the People's Assembly itself. Polling is done secretly by sealed ballot in special booths and is under the supervision of electoral committees appointed by the mass organisations of the Democratic Front – trade unions, youth and women's associations and the working collectives of industrial enterprises, agricultural co-operatives, government ministries, army units and so on. These same mass organisations of workers have the right to present any of their members as candidates. No taxes, guarantees or deposits are demanded of candidates nor of the organisations nominating them. At pre-electoral meetings, characterised by a spirit of criticism and self-criticism, the past activities of all the candidates for a particular post are thoroughly discussed and they are obliged to give a full account of their work. The winner of the election is the candidate receiving one more vote than half the number of electors registered in that particular constituency and participation in the voting is nearly 100%.

The nomination of Enver Hoxha as a candidate for deputy to the People's Assembly by Tirana constituency number 219 in July, 1970, took the same form as any other nominations in that or any other elections in Albania since the war. His proposer pointed out the significance of Enver Hoxha's nomination from the very district in which he had founded the Albanian Party 29 years before.

In his election speech the following September, Enver Hoxha pointed out that this was the seventh time the people had elected democratically their representatives to the People's Assembly, casting their votes for the candidates of the Democratic Front 'knowing that these are among their best sons and daughters and that, by voting for them, they have voted for the building of socialism, for the freedom and independence of the Homeland, for its prosperity, for the

Marxist-Leninist line of our Party. . . . On September 20 all the people of socialist Albania without exception will go to the polls and vote directly for the persons they wish to send to the People's Councils, to the People's Courts of Justice and to the People's Assembly, thus ratifying the state power which was born to them from the barrel of the rifle in the course of their national struggle. . . . During the election campaign the working people draw up a balance sheet of their creative work, pointing out the good and negative aspects of the work and those who have performed it, criticising weaknesses and shortcomings, adopting and upholding progress made and promoting to government posts those devoted to ceaseless revolutionary advance. The people do this in open, public and free meetings without the least obstacle and without any timidity. They have won the political right and achieved the maturity to hold to account all who err, to pass judgement on all culprits, to praise and encourage those who work well. They are fully conscious of the real force of our proletarian democracy'.

The electoral campaign is an important part of the revolutionary political activity of the Albanian people; but the relations between the people and their representatives do not end when the voting is over and the elected deputies receive their mandate. The deputies have to maintain continuous contact with those who have elected them and report to them in detail at the end of every session. Electors have the right to dismiss a representative and elect someone else. This initiative can be taken either by the electors of the constituency or by the mass organisation of workers which originally presented the representative's candidature.

The People's Assembly, the highest organ of state power, is elected every four years on the basis of one representative for every 8000 inhabitants. It is an executive body as well as legislative, supervising the application of the laws it enacts. Its acts are not subject to consideration, amendment nor alteration by any other body. It elects the Praesidium of the Assembly, the Government, the High Court of the Republic, the Attorney General and his deputies. It also appoints committees to deal with such specific matters as the budget, various social questions or foreign affairs. There are normally

two sessions a year but extraordinary sessions may be called on the initiative of the Praesidium or at the request of one third of the deputies.

The Praesidium, as the permanent organ of the Assembly, exercises the functions of a collective state leadership, calling the sessions of the Assembly, fixing election dates, deciding on the compatibility of laws with the Constitution, awarding decorations, appointing envoys, choosing the supreme command of the armed forces and declaring a state of war in case of aggression against Albania. In all these tasks it is directly responsible to the People's Assembly which elects it and can dismiss it at any time.

The Government of the People's Republic is also appointed and dismissed by the People's Assembly. It does not constitute a separate and independent authority but must render an account to the popular forum of all its activities. At the first session of each newly-elected Assembly the existing prime minister tenders the resignation of his cabinet; and if accepted, the Assembly chooses one of its members as prime minister and charges him with the duty of forming a new cabinet which has to be approved by the Assembly. The Government draws up the general economic plan and presents the budget, directs the monetary system, defends the constitutional order and the rights of citizens and conducts relations with foreign powers.

The popular character of the Government finds expression in its programme which in respect to both internal and external policy reflects and safeguards the interests of the people, of the working masses. The main task of the programme internally is to develop further the productive forces by increasing industrial and agricultural output, to develop socialist relations of production, deepen the socialist revolution in the ideological and cultural spheres and consolidate people's power and the moral and political unity of the people around the Party and Government. The foreign policy of the programme aims at guaranteeing national independence and sovereignty against any danger from abroad, strengthening the friendship, collaboration and mutual aid with the peoples of other socialist countries, supporting the revolutionary national liberation struggles of

the oppressed peoples, extending relations with countries of different social systems based on the principles of equality, non-intervention in each other's internal affairs, mutual respect and profit and safeguarding real peace.

The local organs of state power are the People's Councils which together with the People's Assembly constitute the political basis of Albania. These Councils for villages, districts, towns and city quarters are elected for three years by the same voting procedure as the Assembly. Each Council calls periodic meetings to report on its activities to the electorate and renders an account to the next Council above it in geographical importance. All members are subject to dismissal by the electors and the whole Council can be dissolved if the people feel it has not deserved their confidence. The duties of the Councils are to direct the economic and cultural activity within their jurisdiction, guarantee public order and the rights of citizens and to take responsibility for realising the economic plan and administering the local budget. The executive committee of the Council is chosen at the first meeting after election.

Justice in Albania is administered by the High Court and by District Courts. The High Court is appointed by the People's Assembly for four year periods and the District Courts are elected by the People's Councils for a term of three years. These courts protect from violation the socialist system and socialist property, the political, social and economic rights of the people and the personal and property rights to which they are entitled. The courts must, on the one hand, fight against the internal enemies of socialism with revolutionary violence and, on the other, educate the working masses in the spirit of discipline, socialist legality and socialist ethics.

Candidates to become people's judges and deputy judges are proposed by the various mass organisations and associations of workers like any other candidates and are subject to dismissal on the same terms as other representatives who fail to retain the confidence of the people. The whole legal system is supervised and administered by the Attorney's Office which is an organ of the People's Assembly responsible for the just and uniform application of the laws. District

Attorneys are appointed by this Office to carry out the same function locally.

The democratic character of the judicial system is secured by the fact that judges and deputy judges are elected and can be dismissed by the popular assemblies, that they are elected from among the working masses and that they are helped in their tasks by assistant judges who are ordinary citizens serving 15 days a year in a judicial capacity with the same rights and responsibilities and having the same weight of judgement as the elected judges.

This employment of assistant judges assures the participation of the broad masses in the administration of justice both to enable them to become familiar with the judicial process and to enable the verdicts of the courts to benefit from the conscience of the working class. What is thus achieved is not justice on behalf of the people by those who conceal their own class interests under a show of legal professionalism, but justice by the people themselves – the institutionalisation of those popular courts in violently revolutionary situations when people who have been trampled on for centuries take justice into their own hands and deal summarily with class oppressors whose crimes only they can judge.

In so far as the courts of justice in villages and towns deal with non-antagonistic contradictions among the people, that is, conflicts which do not have their origin in irreconcilable class differences, the very process of debating these issues in a democratic way and passing judgement in which the people are involved plays an educative role in enabling the masses increasingly to resolve such contradictions among themselves. More and more cases of this kind are handled by people in their own collectives at places of work or residence – just as the shrinking number of petty crimes against personal or socialist property are dealt with collectively on the basis of criticism and self-criticism without recourse to the police.

The democratisation, which is to say the revolutionising, of the organs for settling simple civilian conflicts in creating the conditions for the masses to exercise their leading and supervisory role with respect to the judicial system, is also a step in the fight against bureaucracy. In recent years a broad

public discussion has taken place to simplify the laws, make them more understandable and divest them of a purely official character.

Albanian law asserts the leadership of the Party over the courts of justice and subjects them to the criticism and supervision of the working masses. The principle of the absolute independence of the courts of justice, which is simply a constitutional device for concealing their real class character, is replaced by the frank recognition of the judicial system as an institution of the dictatorship of the proletariat, not pretending to stand above classes, above society, but openly serving the interests of the working class.

The various organs of the Albanian state and the Constitution itself do not impose a democratic character on the country; they reflect and make explicit the democracy inherent in the dictatorship of the proletariat established by the working masses under the leadership of the Albanian Party of Labour in the revolutionary war which not only expelled external invaders but also destroyed the internal basis of exploiting classes. The government of Albania expresses the political power of the broad working masses and has no other interests than those of the working masses on whose support and participation it absolutely relies.

The dictatorship of the proletariat cannot be strengthened and the all round development of socialist democracy cannot be realised without a determined struggle against bureaucracy. The roots of the regressive and counter-revolutionary process which has taken place in certain erstwhile socialist countries like the Soviet Union and the East European People's Republics must be sought in the gradual bureaucratisation of the socialist state apparatus, in its estrangement from the broad masses and in the creation of a privileged class of bureaucrats. 'Bureaucracy', as Enver Hoxha explained in his report to the Fifth Congress of the Party in 1966, 'is a consequence of alien influences inherited from the old feudal and bourgeois state machinery, from the detaching of some cadres and organs from the masses, from the blind application of foreign experience without taking into consideration the concrete conditions of our country, from the cultural backwardness inherited from the past, from the

pressure of bourgeois and revisionist ideology, from the lack of looking at problems from a political angle.'

Enver Hoxha in that same very important speech at the Fifth Congress went on to say: 'Fundamentally our Party line on state building and on the general orientation of people's power has been correct. But in our practical activity there have occurred many bureaucratic distortions and shortcomings, such as subordination of elected to executive organs, exaggerated formalism in the operation of elected organs, excessive concentration of competence in a few hands, relying for everything on the administration, limitation of the active participation of the masses in the solution of state and social problems and in the control of state organs, bureaucratic distortions in socialist legislation. . . . Therefore the measures adopted by the Party for the eradication of red tape must not be seen as measures of a simple organisational and technical character for the elimination of certain shortcomings and gaps in the work of state organs but as measures having a deep political character, because the struggle against red tape is one of the most important aspects of the class struggle in our country at the present time.'

The fight against bureaucracy has to go deep because its roots are deep. 'This concept of thinking,' Enver Hoxha explained in a later speech on the revolutionising of Party and Government, 'the idealistic ideology of bureaucratism, is . . . the ideology of minority class rule over the majority – an ideology which the minority inculcates into the minds and conscience of the majority through culture, education, politics and morals in order to make it their second nature, a manner of life, thought and action.' This is the reason why it is necessary, as must be considered in more detail, to extend the dictatorship of the proletariat into the ideological realm of education, ethics and the arts generally where bourgeois ways of thinking have their tightest grip – a cultural revolution which complements the revolutionising of the economic base of society.

Some of the measures taken under the leadership of the Albanian Party of Labour in the fight against bureaucracy are: curtailing higher salaries to establish a more just ratio of

incomes, participation of cadres, administrative personnel, intellectuals and students directly in manual labour side by side with workers and farmers, systematic circulation of cadres from the centre to the grass roots and back again, placing cadres, Party members and all state employees under the rigorous supervision of the working masses, application of the principle of *democratic* centralism against any symptoms of *bureaucratic* centralism and improvement of the method and style of work by treating all state and economic problems not from the standpoint of 'technocracy' and 'economism' but from the standpoint of the Party's policy and ideology, always keeping proletarian politics in the forefront.

The fight against bureaucracy and the measures for improving the style of work of the whole state apparatus are not a temporary campaign. They are an essential part of the continuing struggle to preserve state power in the hands of the working masses and to prevent the degeneration of the state into the dictatorship of a new privileged class.

This struggle was raised to a higher level following the Fifth Congress of the Party in 1966. The process of the revolutionising of the whole life of the country on the principle of the greatest possible mass involvement has not only strengthened the economic base of society but has led to profound developments of a social, political and ideological nature as well. The Albanian people have acquired new experience concerning how to bar the way to revisionism and the restoration of capitalism and how to ensure the continued march of the revolution to its final victory in full communism.

It is as a result of these developments in the further revolutionising of the life of the country that in the Report on the Activity of the Central Committee submitted by Enver Hoxha to the Sixth Congress of the Party of Labour of Albania held in Tirana at the beginning of November, 1971, the proposal was made for the drafting of a new constitution. The Report which the Congress unanimously adopted says:

'Viewed through the prism of these deep revolutionary changes, the Constitution in force, in spite of later

amendments and additions, has become outdated in many fundamental aspects and no longer reflects the socialist reality in Albania today. Therefore, the Central Committee of the Party proposes the drafting of a new constitution appropriate to the present stage of the country's development, to the new reality, so that, as a component part of the political superstructure, it may serve the economic base and the whole socialist development of society better.

'The reframing of the Constitution will be a step of great theoretical and practical importance for the strengthening and further improvement of the state of the dictatorship of the proletariat in our country. The new Constitution will serve as a juridical basis for the state organisation and legislation required by the present stage of our socialist construction. It must be a juridical, political and ideological document which completely reflects the line of the Party embodied in our revolutionary practice and inspires the working people in the struggle for the complete construction of a socialist society.'

There was nothing wrong with the existing constitution during the period in which it has reflected the consolidation of national independence after the War and the first stages of building socialism. In terms of political maturity the Albanian people have simply outgrown it. The phase of popular democracy has been succeeded by the phase of full socialism with the working class playing the leading role not only politically and economically but culturally as well. The implications of these profound social developments require expression in a new document which will be a milepost in the advance of the Albanian people along the road to communism.

Chapter Ten

The Party

Any place one goes in Albania, town or countryside, coastal plain or mountains, one sees, painted on factory walls, inscribed on colourful banners strung across streets, picked out in flowers of different hues in garden cities like Vlora or depicted in white-washed rocks high up on a hillside, the slogan, 'Long Live the Albanian Party of Labour!' This is the natural expression of a people's pride and confidence in an organisation without which the victorious liberation war, the successes of the drive toward socialism and, indeed, the whole prosperous, co-operative fabric of life in Albania today would be inconceivable. The period since the founding of the Party of Labour in 1941 is the most brilliant in the long story of the Albanian people, realising Marx's observation that socialism is the beginning of history, true history made by men consciously pursuing their aims in co-operation; and everything before, the whole dark period of class-divided societies based on exploitation, is prehistoric.

In the constitution of the People's Republic of Albania there is only one reference to the Party, in Article 21 which guarantees to citizens the right to join social organisations. These include the Democratic Front, the trade unions, the co-operatives, organisations of youth and of women, organisations for sport and defence, or cultural, scientific and technical societies. Finally 'the more active and conscientious citizens of the working class and of the working masses join the ranks of the Albanian Party of Labour, the vanguard organisation of the working class and of all the working masses in their endeavours to build the bases of socialism and the leading nucleus of all the organisations of the working masses, social as well as the state.' But this brief mention

describes implicitly the Party of Labour's vital role as the sole directing and leading force in the socialist system of proletarian dictatorship.

This force rests on the Party's close and permanent ties with the working masses. In the daily revolutionary experience of the masses, by their support and opinions, the Party tests the justice and validity of its decisions, enriches its own experience and gets the necessary inspiration to continue its advance. In compliance with the aspirations of the masses the Party issues directives and instructions on important political, economic, social, cultural and organisational questions. Thus its influence interpenetrates and flows through all the state organs, making itself felt as a constant pressure guiding the whole society along the road to socialism.

Not part of the state organs defined in the Constitution, the Party was the initiating force in elaborating the Constitution and presenting it to the Constituent Assembly. The influence of the Party on the activities of the state is exerted primarily through the Party members who may be assigned to commanding posts in the state apparatus and are to be found at all levels in the governmental and legal structure, bringing to whatever position they occupy the added zeal and leadership which their Party membership enables them to exert, thus breathing into the whole state edifice the directive inspiration of the Party.

In order to implement this guiding role the Party creates branches in all the elected organs of the people's democratic government and in all the industrial, co-operative and social organisations. It is the duty of these branches to strengthen the Party's influence and to uphold its policy among those who are not Party members, to strengthen socialist discipline and to prosecute the war against bureaucracy, to supervise the execution of Party directives. The leading role of the Party over the people's democratic state does not mean at all that Party organs are substituted for the corresponding government organs. The Party's acts are not juridical and are only obligatory for those citizens who are members.

At the same time the Party's acts are of special importance to the state organs since they determine the general line and the essential content of all the acts formulated and executed

by the state. They create the very political climate in which the state functions. And in certain cases, with regard to questions vital to the development of the social order, the Party issues directives jointly with the state organs, thus converting them into juridical acts which are binding on all citizens. The most important directives are those issued by the highest forum of the Party of Labour – its Congress. These directives provide the basis for the measures adopted by the state organs for the development of the country's social and political life.

The Party of Labour also plays a leadership role in respect to the activities of all the mass organisations in the Democratic Front. They are the Party's most important links with the people and through them the vital two-way process of learning from the people in order to teach and guide them is conducted. Just as during the war, in the early days of the Party, the source of its authority was the quality of its members, communists always being the first to undertake the most dangerous missions and to maintain morale in the face of the gravest hardships, so in the period of socialist construction the willingness of communists to accept cheerfully the most arduous tasks, go wherever they are needed most and exemplify the socialist morality of putting the collective interest before self-interest is the basis of the Party's influence among the masses.

The correctness of this close relationship between Party and mass organisations is illustrated by the fact that in those countries which have abandoned socialism and are in the process of restoring capitalism one of the steps taken was to proclaim the independence of mass organisations from the communist party, which in fact meant independence from a proletarian political line. Described as 'freeing' these organisations from politics it really involved cutting them off from proletarian influence to allow them to fall under bourgeois influence. As Ramiz Alia, a prominent member of the Albanian Party of Labour who has played a leading part in mass organisations has explained: 'The hegemony of the proletariat is necessarily linked with the existence of the revolutionary party of the working class. Without the leading role of the party the hegemony and the historic mission of

the working class are empty phrases. The efforts of modern revisionists to prove that the historic mission of the working class and the leading role of the communist party are two different things, that thanks only to the place it occupies in the system of social production the working class can play its leadership role, even without a Marxist-Leninist party or through other so-called "workers' parties" (like the British Labour Party) which are in the service of the bourgeoisie, have nothing in common with scientific socialism'.

There are historical and political reasons why there have been no other parties in Albania from the time of the founding of the Communist Party, the Albanian Party of Labour. During the period of the liberation war, when the widest possible alliance was sought against the fascist armies of occupation, it would have been consonant with a correct Marxist-Leninist line for other political parties to have been included in the National Liberation Front if they supported the national resistance movement led by the Communist Party on behalf of the working masses. In fact Albania is a rare example of a country in which, prior to the creation of the Communist Party, there existed neither social democratic nor any other bourgeois parties. In the course of the war various political groupings which might have constituted parties discredited themselves by collaboration with the enemy and thus eliminated themselves from the anti-fascist coalition.

After liberation, the remnants of the old exploiting classes with the support of United States and British agents tried to establish a political party with the aim of undermining the People's Democratic Government. But this attempt at creating political support for the tiny minority of landowners and capitalists was in such obvious and direct conflict with the interests of the overwhelming masses of workers and peasants that it stood no chance whatever of succeeding.

It is not surprising that those who backed the formation of the kind of political parties which could disrupt and reverse the revolutionary course of the country should describe the absence of other parties as 'undemocratic'. The democratic character of a state is not demonstrated by the number of its political parties, nor by the variety of cunningly-devised

programmes offered to the public, nor by noisy electoral campaigns and demagogical promises which never seem to make any real difference however the people vote. It is determined by whether the class in power is that of workers or exploiters, whether state activity serves the interests of a privileged minority owning a disproportionate amount of the sources of wealth or the broad working masses who produce that wealth. Albanian experience has proved that a Marxist-Leninist party of the working class whose interests are no different from those of peasants and progressive intellectuals is not only perfectly capable of representing and safeguarding the real interests of the people but, in the absence of other parties which would necessarily be bourgeois, discharges even better its mission of liberating the nation and proceeding with the socialist revolution.

In any case once the working class has assumed state power, as occurred in Albania with the final defeat of external and internal enemies, the existence of any party save that of the workers would be political nonsense. As Enver Hoxha says on this point: 'Since the war of classes continues during the period of building a socialist society, during the transition to communism, and since political parties express the interests of particular classes, the presence of other, non-Marxist-Leninist parties would be absurd . . . especially after the construction of the economic base of socialism. This does not at all jeopardise democracy but, on the contrary, strengthens real proletarian democracy.'

Just as members of the Party, sharing the same commitment to seeing that the ideology of socialism permeates every aspect of work and life, by belonging both to the organs of the state and the mass organisations help to unite government and people, so they have a similar role to play in resolving other distinctions in Albanian society. The further development of socialism demands that certain social contradictions inherited from the past be narrowed and eventually eliminated – such as those between working class and peasantry, between town and country, between industry and agriculture, between mental and manual labour. If these contradictions are not dealt with, they can grow to the point where they divide society and even generate new class differences.

But members of the Party, operating on both sides of each of these contradictions, imbued with the common aim of progressively reducing them, make a major contribution toward creating the more equitable and more closely united society in which socialism can flourish.

In his 1966 report to the Fifth Congress, Enver Hoxha criticised the Party for not making the fullest use of the distribution of members in order to break down these contradictions. While approving the general trend of recruiting the majority of members from production centres, from the ranks of the working class and the labouring peasantry, he pointed out anomalies like the overweighting of city membership which worked against the principle of unification. Similarly with differences like those between youth and age or between men and women, he pointed out the need to fight conservative attitudes which had led to the under-representation of women and young people. 'The admission of women to the Party is still unsatisfactory and does not correspond to the vivid, active and revolutionary contribution they are making in all fields of the country's socialist construction'. And also 'the youth organisation must be regarded as the inexhaustible revolutionary reserve for the growth of the Party ranks'.

Since the Party plays such a crucial role in maintaining the thrust of further socialist development, in assuring correct relations between leadership and people, in resolving social contradictions and strengthening the dictatorship of the proletariat, it is plain that the health of the Party through continuously pumping in fresh blood to revivify all the Party's organs is a matter of the gravest concern for the whole country.

While the Party needs new blood this blood must be clean. Careful attention is paid to such qualities in the candidate member as character, morals, self-sacrificing spirit, political maturity, revolutionary élan and links with the masses. The term of candidature is not merely formal but a two to three year period of testing the candidate's conduct on the work front of socialist construction, his discipline, resourcefulness and ability to defend the Party line, his relationships with fellow workers and the working masses generally, the respect

and love he enjoys from comrades and his harshness to his own errors and shortcomings. It is also a period of intensive ideological and political education.

What is required of the members of the Albanian Party of Labour once they have been accepted as full participants in Party work? Enver Hoxha set out these requirements in considerable detail in his 1966 report.

'The members of our revolutionary Party should be loyal to the teachings of Marxism-Leninism, to our Party and to the people, ready for every sacrifice that may be required in the interests of the revolution and socialism.

'Communists must have the disciplined determination to implement the Party line and the state laws without allowing the application of directives to become mechanical. They must be creative, understanding the political essence of Party decisions and governmental acts in order to apply them to concrete situations in such a way as to insure their effectiveness.

'They must be rigorously conscientious in seeing that their Party membership does not bring and will never bring them even the slightest personal privilege but only confers on them the most difficult and responsible tasks. Those who think differently and use their Party cards to obtain for themselves or for those personally associated with them any material or moral advantages do not deserve, not even for a moment, the honour of being Party members.

'Communists should be closely linked with the masses, attentively and respectfully listen to what they have to say, live and work with them, sense their feelings and know their needs, put themselves at the head of the masses and lead them. They must regard as inimical every characteristic, self-conceitedness, arrogance or commandism, which leads to negligence or under-estimation of the masses and their work.

'Valuable members of our Party are those who always take into account and fearlessly wage class struggle, outside and within the ranks of the Party, relying for this continuous struggle on the fundamental principles of Marxism-Leninism.

'They must know how to distinguish, following a correct dialectical analysis, between what is good and what is bad, what is dangerous and what is bold and creative. They must

be able to use methods of education and persuasion, always leaving coercion to the last. Good revolutionary Party members are those who by their work and behaviour win the confidence and affection of the people, who educate and save those who make mistakes, who attack mercilessly with the greatest hatred the incorrigible and socially dangerous enemies of our people and our Party.

'Communists must be endowed with revolutionary vigilance in defending the Party line and the purity of its ideals. They must never hide their shortcomings and errors, criticising their own failures without waiting for others to do it for them. Only thus will they be in a position to criticise the shortcomings of their comrades and correct others by the example of their own principled conduct.

'Revolutionary members must work conscientiously at whatever place the Party has assigned them, always putting above everything the general interest. They should never connive at any unhealthy situation created by incorrect conclusions and decisions taken by any Party or state organ, neither should they comply with wrong or arbitrary instructions by any functionary. Sound centralisation in the Party organisation must be dialectically linked with the decentralised responsibility of every Party member, collective responsibility rightly combined with the individual responsibility of each communist.'

What Enver Hoxha has described at some length as the requirements of Party members is simply Marxist morality – a morality, in Lenin's words, 'entirely subordinated to the interests of the class struggle of the proletariat. . . . For us (Marxists) there is no such thing as morality apart from human society'. And ending exploitation in human society can only be achieved by uniting the vast majority who are exploited, the workers, against the class of exploiters and oppressors in a protracted struggle to abolish classes altogether. Class struggle contains by implication the whole of Marxist morality. In the social reality of the 'class' such feelings as solidarity, fraternity and the love of one's fellow man, which cannot except as mere abstract humanism stretch across the gulf between oppressors and oppressed, find their true expression among those sharing the burden of oppres-

sion in all its forms and capable by their comradeship and unity of emancipating themselves and society. In the activity of 'struggle' is realised Marx's injunction that the point is not simply to understand the world but to change it – to the sort of place where those fellow feelings need no longer be limited in their extent because society will no longer be divided into exploited and exploiters.

It might be wondered if a sufficient number of people could be found in Albania, or in any country for that matter, who by being prepared to commit themselves to so strenuous an ethic could keep the Communist Party up to strength and able to perform its tasks of leadership. But it must be remembered that with the revolutionary overthrow of the exploiting class and the assumption of state power by the working class, as occurred in Albania along with the successful conclusion of the liberation war, the whole moral climate of a country begins to change; and for the individualistic, competitive, self-seeking conduct encouraged by capitalism is progressively substituted the fight against self-interest and the co-operative realisation of the collective good demanded by socialism. The test of whether such people exist in Albania and can be recruited in adequate numbers to man the defences against a restoration of capitalism and to construct a new society from which exploitation in any form has been eliminated is precisely the extent to which socialist relations of product at the economic base and socialist morality in the cultural superstructure have been achieved and are being further developed.

The Party of Labour of Albania, Enver Hoxha goes on to say in his report, must cherish those members who have worked long and devotedly in the Party ranks and have acquired great experience in struggle – not by petting them, but by safeguarding them and continuing to provide them with revolutionary tasks commensurate with their ability. The committees and Party organisations generally must pay their main attention not to figures of production increases but to the education of communists and the working people. It is people who create material wealth and heroically apply the Party line, and it is people also who degenerate, steal or damage socialist property and violate state laws.

The principle of democratic centralism, the subordination of the minority to the majority and the lower organs to the higher, is not simply an organisational question but one of the fundamental forms of education and political development within the Party. Democratic centralism combines iron-like discipline with full democracy, ensuring the implementation of decisions arrived at after the widest discussion and testing these decisions by social practice. In the verification of decisions in terms of their social consequences communists themselves, the majority on a particular issue as well as the minority, are remoulded and tempered. If the correctness of the decision is confirmed by reality this serves to educate the minority voting against that decision's adoption. If practice proves the contrary, then the majority voting for the decision must make self-criticism and consider why they arrived at a wrong conclusion.

Above all, the seriousness of a revolutionary party lies in its attitude to its own errors and shortcomings. In his report to the Second Congress of the Party in 1952 Enver Hoxha took the whole Party severely to task in order to improve methods of leadership. 'We call meeting after meeting which go on for hours and days on end but very little comes out of them. Decisions are taken, many decisions at that, but not all of them are applied. Then nearly as many decisions are taken again to carry out the previous decisions. New decisions are adopted also on matters already decided upon, but forgotten. This is trifling with the work, pretending you are working and deciding issues when in reality you are obstructing the work'.

Returning to the theme of Party shortcomings in the 1966 report Enver Hoxha urged: 'Not a single Party organisation, cadre or communist should be afraid of criticism and self-criticism. It is a great error to take a bureaucratic or liberal attitude towards errors, no matter by whom committed. Criticism and self-criticism should not only be conducted behind closed doors, within the Party organisations, but on occasions it must be carried out in the presence of the working masses. The Party and its members do not work and fight separated from the masses so their errors and shortcomings have consequences for the working

masses and are not unknown to them. The activity of the Party and its members must be under the control of the masses. It is a mistake to think that Party problems should be tackled only by communists or that elections to Party posts should be held secretly without being known to non-members as if the Party were an illegal organisation, or as if the working people were indifferent to the problems discussed by communists, the tasks they assign themselves and the leaders they have elected'.

Speaking on the further revolutionisation of the Party and the Government in 1968, Enver Hoxha defined the class nature of the Albanian Party of Labour. 'We know that our Party of Labour is, like all genuine Marxist-Leninist parties, an organised detachment of the working class. This implies that those in the Party are the best, most revolutionary and most resolute vanguard of that class. Such people do not fall as manna from heaven. They emerge from the ranks of the masses and distinguish themselves at work and in battle by their virtues and conduct. Those admitted to the Party come from various classes in our society, from the working class, from agricultural co-operatives, from employees, from intellectuals and people of other walks of life. Nevertheless our Party is not an arena of classes in which each class has its proportional number of representatives defending the individual interests of each class. No, the hegemony in our Party is possessed by the working class with its own ideology, Marxism-Leninism'.

By the time of the Sixth Party Congress in November, 1971, out of a Party membership of 86,000, workers made up 56% of the members and co-operative peasants 29%. During this Congress the Control and Audit Commission reported that from 1967 to 1970 1,323 members and 434 candidate members had been expelled from the Party and 1,400 full members had been reduced to candidate members. There were 1,320 appeals against expulsion handled by the Commission and in 75% of these cases the decision of the local Party committees to expel was upheld. The majority were expelled for shortcomings resulting from insufficient education in Marxism-Leninism, for violations of socialist norms and for dissolute behaviour.

The importance of these figures, covering the period following on Enver Hoxha's call for greater efforts by communists to take the lead in ideological struggle, is the proof they provide that belonging to the Party of Labour of Albania does not give one special privileges nor put one beyond criticism. To the contrary membership represents greater obligations to serve the people. The Party can only play its leadership role if it purges itself of those unworthy of the name of communists as well as continuously revivifying itself with fresh blood. Over 20,000 new members were taken in to the Party between the Fifth and Sixth Congresses.

Enver Hoxha's continuing concern for the rectitude of the Albanian Party of Labour which he founded, is only one aspect of the correct leadership he has given to the Albanian people ever since he took the initiative in organising their resistance to the fascist occupation of the country. As Commander-in-Chief of the Liberation Army, as acknowledged head of the Party and State he has always been in the forefront of the struggle for national independence and socialist development. The appreciation of the people for his guidance and for his sharing with them every hardship along the difficult way they have travelled to Albania's present position as Europe's only socialist country takes many forms. Along with slogans wishing a long life to the Party which are to be seen everywhere, appear as frequently the letters ENVER as a popular tribute to their comrade and leader. Every appearance of Enver Hoxha on the streets of the capital or in whatever other town or district he visits – and many are the occasions formal and informal on which he moves freely among the people – becomes a spontaneous triumphal procession. The house where he was born in Gjirokastra has become one of the museums of the Albanian revolution.

There is nothing slavish or 'mass organised' about these demonstrations of affection and respect. That would be entirely alien to the tough independent character of the Albanian people. They love the man as a staunch comrade in struggle; but he also embodies for them the political and philosophical line which has enabled them to achieve so much by their own correctly-orientated efforts. Their deep

regard for Enver Hoxha, as for the Party of Labour of Albania, is ultimately a regard for the principles of scientific socialism which, applied to the specific conditions of Albania, have freed them from external interference and laid the foundations of their socialist society.

Marxism by no means rejects the concept of leadership. Indeed it denies that workers in their conflict with the class enemy generate spontaneously the revolutionary theory necessary for building a revolutionary movement. They require a political party playing a vanguard, leadership role in respect to the working class as a whole. Similarly, in the ranks of revolutionaries there are leaders who are particularly well equipped to apply the principles of scientific socialism, Marxism-Leninism, to the concrete conditions of their own sphere of engagement. Marxism's unique contribution is to define the dialectical relation between leadership and people in terms of the mass line, from the masses to the masses, which prevents leaders from becoming detached from the people and the people from being deprived of democratic control.

In the great social transformations of recent history the working masses in revolt against oppressive conditions have had the leadership of a communist party and, also, of a revolutionary genius who combined to a remarkable degree the grasp of scientific theory and the profound understanding of the social forces in his own country enabling him to apply that theory concretely with outstanding success, thus contributing creatively to the deepening and broadening of the theory itself. Such was Lenin who led the workers, peasants and soldiers of Russia in the first conquest of state power and firm establishment of a dictatorship of the proletariat. Mao Tsetung led the Chinese people in their own revolutionary struggle and demonstrated by his leadership of the proletarian cultural revolution that the working masses, having won state power and established a dictatorship of the proletariat, could hold on to it by rooting out the remnants of bourgeois ideology and smashing any attempt to restore capitalism. Ho Chi Minh led the Vietnamese in proving that a relatively small country organised in people's war, under the guidance of a communist party, could take on and defeat the

most powerful imperialist aggressor of our times. What Enver Hoxha's leadership of the Albanian people has shown is that no country is too small, no people too few to defend their national sovereignty against a whole array of hostile powers and set about the task, in self-reliance, of building socialism. In so doing Enver Hoxha, the leaders and people of Albania have enriched the revolutionary experience and theoretical understanding of the world proletariat. That is the test of great Marxist-Leninist leadership.

Of course these great leaders have always worked in the closest association with others of comparable grasp and understanding, and on the recruitment to the leadership of younger men with the same qualities depends the continued advance of socialist construction and socialist morality. Such in Albania are men like Mehmet Shehu, Hysni Kapo, Gogo Nushi who recently died, Myslim Peza, Abdyl Kellezi, Haxhi Lleshi, Shefquet Peci, Beqir Balluku, Ramiz Alia, Manush Myftiu, Spiro Koleka, Rita Marko, Haki Toska, Adil Çarçani – to mention only a few of those distinguished by their service to the people who themselves include in their ranks innumerable heroes and heroines of Albania's struggles in war and peace.

Chapter Eleven

The Mass Organisations

Revolution and socialism are the achievement of the masses themselves. 'The people and the people alone are the motive force in the making of world history.' The experience and revolutionary practice of the masses are the inexhaustible source from which the Albanian Party of Labour draws its inspiration and elaborates its political line on the basis of learning from the masses in order to be able to teach them.

This mass line is not only expressed in the organisational principle of democratic centralism; it is rooted in the very theory of knowledge of Marxism. All knowledge originates in perception of the objective external world through man's physical sense organs, a stage corresponding to empiricism. This perceptual knowledge is then deepened to rational knowledge through the arranging and reconstruction of sense impressions in judgement and inference, a stage corresponding to idealism. But the process of the production of knowledge is only complete when this rational knowledge has been tested in social practice, when the abstract ideas of physical and social laws have been directed to the practice of changing both the objective and subjective world by their application to production, to scientific experiment, to revolutionary class struggle.

Truth as the product of social practice is not to be found in the minds of exceptional individuals but in the experience, renewing itself from generation to generation, of the broad mass of the people. This is the source socialism taps in unleashing the energies and skills of the whole people – 'the vivid creativeness of the masses' which Lenin describes as 'the fundamental factor of the new social life'.

The process of the mass line as set forth by Mao Tsetung

exactly parallels the process of the production of knowledge. 'Take the ideas of the masses (scattered and unsystematic ideas) and concentrate them (through study turn them into concentrated and systematic ideas) then go to the masses and propagate and explain these ideas until the masses embrace them as their own, hold fast to them and translate them into action, and test the correctness of these ideas in such action'. Once the ideas drawn from the experience of the masses are taken back to the masses as an elaborated theory of revolutionary change and are grasped by the masses they become 'a material force which changes society and changes the world'. As Enver Hoxha expresses it: 'Marxism-Leninism is not a privilege and monopoly of certain "able-minded" people who can understand it. It is the scientific ideology of the working class and the working masses and only when its ideas are mastered by the working masses does it cease to be something abstract and become a great material force for the revolutionary transformation of the world'.

He stigmatises those who neglect either aspect of this two-way dialectic between masses and leadership. 'Those who underestimate and despise the experience of the working masses, who try to command others on the basis of their authority, in reality have nothing to teach the masses. They are empty-headed chatterboxes whose only 'capital' is their conceitedness and arrogance. On the other hand there are some communists who vulgarise the links with the masses and the idea of listening to their opinions. They passively listen to what different working people say. They approve everything that is said and do not take a stand on principle, do not try to analyse the ideas expressed by the working people in order to distinguish what is correct from what is wrong, the important from the trivial and to sum up the mass experience'.

To deepen the mass line the Party has to devote special attention to the mass organisations which play a vital role in consolidating the links of the Party with the working people so that the working people, remoulded in a communist way, can become the politically conscious masters of the country.

The National Liberation Front through which the Party had maintained the closest ties with the Albanian people

during the anti-fascist struggle became, after the successful conclusion of the war, the Democratic Front incorporating such mass organisations as trade unions, the unions of youth and of women, the union of writers and various other cultural and social groupings. These Democratic Front organisations have continued to play an important part in transmitting the Party line to the people, in educating them in political unity around the Party and the socialist state and also in providing organised attendance to what the masses in the countryside and cities have to say so that they can participate actively in solving social and state problems and in struggling against regressive habits and tendencies inimical to the building of socialism.

Trade unions, organised not on the basis of craft skills nor kinds of work done, but representing all the workers in a particular factory or industrial enterprise, are schools of communism for developing class consciousness at points of production and for drawing workers into a leadership rôle not only in respect to the productive process itself, but to the administration of the plant and the social life of the people working there. They have the responsibility of encouraging socialist emulation as the main motivation for better and more creative methods of work and they are the principal channel for the two-way flow of concrete proposals and counter-proposals between the economic organs of the state and the working people in the compilation of the five-year plans.

Any Albanian factory is a model of democratic organisation. The workers, trade union secretaries and Party cadres are willing to talk freely about their own or anyone else's conditions of work or rates of pay, including managers, specialists or section leaders, because nothing is hidden from general knowledge. In a prominent place a bulletin board will contain notices of individual workers or collectives who have done outstandingly good work or, perhaps, developed some productive innovation in machines or their use. There will also be references to those who have done slipshod work. The 'fletë rrufe', or public notice board for criticism and self-criticism, is the most characteristic and universal social phenomenon in Albania and the rules governing its use are

strictly adhered to. In a factory, for example, no charge of incompetence against any individual or collective can go unanswered. No counter-charge against the original critic or critics constitutes an acceptable response. Time limits are set for the person or collective criticised to explain why the thing was done and, if wrong, to make self-criticism. An unsatisfactory response or self-criticism considered to be insincere have resulted in factory managers' being replaced.

What often strikes a visitor as strange are the flower gardens and trees around factory buildings. But of course they belong to the working people; they are the places where they spend a good part of their time; there is no reason why they should not be made as pleasant as possible.

Party members in the trade unions, who in this as in all such mass organisations, help to keep politics in command, have the responsibility of preventing narrowness of outlook and a tendency to deal primarily with economic problems. Unchecked this tendency can result in a failure to wage class struggle and to carry out the primary task of the revolutionary tempering of workers, carelessly accepting as members, without discussion, anyone working at a particular enterprise even if he is demoralised or has an anti-working class attitude.

The future of socialism depends on educating the new generation in a class revolutionary spirit and this responsibility is undertaken by the Union of Labour Youth of Albania. It is to its young people that a country must look for passing on and further developing socialist achievements and, ultimately, for accomplishing the transition from socialist to communist society. The patriotic and revolutionary youth of Albania, ideologically healthy and morally sound, prepared for hard work in the construction of socialism and self-sacrifice in the defence of the country, shows that the Union of Youth is functioning correctly in close association with the Party.

The communist education of Albanian youth is taking place in the midst of class struggle at home and abroad and in the context of bitter and complicated ideological differences between revisionist and socialist countries. Furthermore young people do not know from personal experience the savage class oppression of the past and the sacrifices required

to end it. In the relatively peaceful conditions of present-day Albania great care must be taken that they are not influenced, as has been the case in the East European people's democracies, by bourgeois ideas which, through the media of literature, films, music, fashion and so forth, can take many subtle and insidious forms.

Students particularly may betray such bourgeois tendencies as idleness and intellectualism, detachment from the masses and unconcern with the problems and worries of the people, exaggerated demands and pretensions, conceitedness and disregard for the revolutionary experience of older people.

Participation in physical work is part of their revolutionary training and helps to combat the idea that the value of schooling is to enable one to acquire diplomas and degrees, a nice safe job and a certain amount of comfort. In Albania all new railway construction is carried out by young people working in their holidays or during periods taken off from formal education. A visit to one of their work camps along the line, or to some bare hillside where they are engaged in terracing and planting trees, confirms the salutary effect of such organised physical labour in encouraging a sense of comradeship among themselves and the ideal of being of service to the people.

On the other hand, there are misunderstandings in the rest of society about the needs and demands of youth, unjust complaints about their behaviour and expressions of mistrust in their ability and willingness to learn. The Union of Labour Youth, co-operating with the Party committees, can combat such prejudices, win respect for their energy and zeal and open up opportunities for them to play a full and responsible part in socialist construction.

The position of women is a vital question for any socialist country. In feudal and bourgeois societies most women suffer the double inequality of exploitation by both class and sex. This was particularly true of pre-war Albania where many women still went veiled and in the feudal north the Lek Dukagjini, a canon of morals covering such customs as the blood feud and defining the position of women as that of chattel, still governed social relations. One quotation from

this canon gives some indication of the life women led. 'A woman must work harder than a donkey for the latter feeds on grass, which costs nothing, while a woman lives on bread'.

During the liberation war women fought side by side with men and 6,000 of the 70,000 partisan fighters were women and girls. At the First Congress of Anti-fascist Women, Enver Hoxha said 'Albanian women won their rights with blood and these rights are guaranteed by the Government of the People which they, along with their brothers, founded at the cost of great sacrifices'.

The Union of the Women of Albania has made a valuable contribution to the radical change in the position of women, placing before them the perspective of throwing off the yoke imposed by the outlook and habits of the old regressive family, doing away with their cultural backwardness and participating in productive labour to win economic and social emancipation and equality with men in all fields.

Women have responded to this challenge and now make up some 42% of the work force, engaged in all professions and branches of industry except the hardest and most dangerous jobs. But a struggle still has to be waged against the old enslaving concepts. There is a contradiction in the attitude even of many communists who in work and social life respect socialist ethics but in their family life still act unconsciously on the old assumption of the inequality of women. While in the field of production there is an equitable division of labour between men and women, when it comes to housework, which is back breaking and tedious, no such division of labour is as widespread as it should be. Much has been done to create better facilities for the accomplishment of housework, to provide nurseries, kindergartens and canteens in towns and on co-operative farms; but much more needs to be done to enable women to participate on absolutely equal terms in every sphere of productive and social life.

The Women's Union in partnership with the Party still has the considerable responsibility of educating women to play the fullest part in socialist construction claiming on their behalf all the assistance they need to do so and of educating men to get rid of the last vestiges of male chauvinism in order to play *their* fullest part in the socialist family.

Other mass organisations must be considered under appropriate headings. A necessary condition for these mass organisations to carry out the arduous democratic tasks assigned to them is the continuing support and assistance of the Albanian Party of Labour. Since it is the duty of every communist to be with the working masses, to work among them and to provide them with correct political leadership, no mass organisation is without its complement of active Party cadres to help them realise their important function of mediating creatively between Party and people.

Chapter Twelve

Creating the Socialist Economic Base

At the end of the anti-fascist war the most pressing problem facing the Albanian people was the reconstruction of the country's shattered economy. To the Party of Labour's call for voluntary work to repair damage and get the wheels turning again there was a willing response, and soon workers and peasants organised in squads, battalions and brigades, just as in the recently-concluded war, were engaged in this new battle for Albania's economic recovery.

Bridges and highways were rebuilt and lines of communication were quickly re-established. During 1945 workers got some of the factories, power stations and mines back into operation. Peasants were mobilised to sow the ploughed land and make a start on rebuilding the burned-out villages. A wave of enthusiasm for work swept the country and young people in their thousands from town and country joined the voluntary labour brigades and worked tirelessly at the tasks of reconstruction.

In January 1945 the law on extraordinary taxation of war profits was passed so that a part of the wealth accumulated by profiteers could be used to meet the immediate needs of the people and help pay for reconstruction. The law further provided that the property of those who refused to pay these taxes was to be confiscated without compensation. During that year revenue from the tax on war profits accounted for more than half of the state budget and with the goods acquired by the state from confiscating the property of defaulters the first state-owned shops were opened initiating a socialist sector in trading.

Another law was passed requisitioning food stuffs and other materials in great need and steps were taken to stamp

out hoarding and speculation; a system of fixed prices was enforced and private accumulation and selling of grain was prohibited; old bank-notes were overprinted in order to begin checking the inflation which had so drastically devalued the war time currency.

These temporary solutions of the country's financial problems facilitated the early stages of reconstruction and at the same time further weakened the economic position of the bourgeoisie. Only a strong infusion of foreign finance from Britain or the United States could have put Albanian capitalists on their feet again and the Party of Labour had categorically rejected all offers from these two countries, knowing only too well from war-time experience the conditions which would be attached to such 'aid'. Apart from fraternal assistance, on a mutually independent basis, from the Soviet Union and the People's Democracies, Albania by the very nature of the people's political power established by the revolutionary war, was firmly committed to developing the economy in the interests of the working masses by relying on their efforts and its own resources. One side of this effort was the whole-hearted response of the people to the Party's call to throw themselves energetically into the work of reconstruction. The other side was the enactment by the people's State of a series of decrees laying the legislative foundation of a socialist economy.

In December 1944 the mines and the property of refugees who had fled the country for political reasons were nationalised, and a month later a law transferred to the Albanian state, without compensation, as the common property of the people, the banks and share-holder companies owned by foreign capitalists. In April 1945 all privately owned means of transportation were taken over. These nationalisation measures were dictated by the democratic needs of the people; but their social and economic content, transferring ownership of the means of production to the people and putting them completely at the people's service, inevitably went beyond the bare requirements of a people's democratic state and created the basis of a socialist state. Since socialism is the ideology of the working class and can only be maintained and developed when the working class enjoys

state power, what this change really amounted to in political terms was the transformation of the people's democratic dictatorship which had united the widest possible coalition of forces in the anti-fascist war into a dictatorship of the proletariat.

In July 1945 consumers' co-operatives were set up in the towns as the first mass economic organisations of the urban working class. In the countryside agrarian measures were enacted to solve the contradiction between the labouring peasantry and the big landowners on the basis of the war-time alliance between peasants and workers. In August 1945 the agrarian reform law was promulgated by which existing state-owned land, the estates of religious institutions and all privately-owned land exceeding certain defined limits was expropriated and assigned for redistribution free of charge among relatively landless peasants on the principle that 'land belongs to the tiller'. The permitted holdings were 100 acres for owner-managers who had demonstrated their ability to farm their land efficiently, 50 acres for those who worked their land themselves and 17 acres for those who did not till their own land but were required to do so within two years.

In a country like Albania where arable land was so limited in extent the holdings left to private proprietors were too large and permitted landlords and rich peasants to retain too much economic power. These shortcomings in agrarian reform resulted from the influence the Communist Party of Yugoslavia exerted at that time through certain members of the Albanian Party of Labour, and once that alien influence had been removed these mistakes had to be rectified.

Up to 12 acres of land were allotted to the head of each family and the buying, selling and leasing of land was prohibited. Committees of poor peasants were set up to supervise the distribution of land and to organise resistance against those who tried in various ways to circumvent agrarian reform. These committees became centres for raising the level of political consciousness in the countryside and took the lead in the movement to form agricultural co-operatives.

Part of the expropriated land was not distributed but

turned into state farms which established a socialist sector in agriculture. Forests, springs, water supplies and all subsoil riches were proclaimed the common property of the people while most of the land cultivated by agricultural workers, their implements and farm animals were the property of co-operatives.

As a result of these measures all the means of production in Albania became social property belonging either to the whole people or to workers combined in handicraft or agricultural co-operatives. State property, the higher form of socialist relations of production, was dominant in the industrial sector in which co-operatives of handicraft workers were marginal; but the agricultural sector was predominantly co-operative with state farms making up a small but influential proportion of the whole. This reflected the basically small scale nature of agriculture and the large scale nature of industrial production. Both forms of ownership had a socialist character in that exploitation was eliminated and distribution was based on the amount of work done.

By the end of 1946 87% of industrial output was contributed by the state sector and the foundation had been laid for the Albanian economy to develop uninterruptedly according to plans hammered out by the working people in exchanges with the state economic organs, without crises or unemployment and with the full rational use of all available labour. Production could be geared to the needs of society regardless of profitability except in the widest sense of what benefited the whole community. But Albania was economically a very poor country and would remain so till small scale production and primitive farming were transformed by increased industrialisation and further collectivisation. Only in this way could the contradiction between the advanced political power and the backward economy, the new socialist relations of production and the low level of the forces of production be resolved – a contradiction which was precisely the opposite of that in the older industrialised countries where highly developed forces of production were in conflict with backward relations of production represented by reactionary state power.

From a primitive agrarian country, probably the most

backward in Europe, Albania was to be turned into an agricultural-industrial country with the emphasis increasingly on the development of industry till, eventually, it would become an industrial country with an advanced agriculture. In 1938 the majority of the working people were engaged in agriculture and only 15,000 workers or 13% of the work force were engaged in industry which accounted for only 4½% of the national income. Such had been the damage and dislocation of the war that it took a little over a year, till the end of 1946, just to get industrial and agricultural production back up to 1938 levels.

But further measures were being taken to assure a rapid all round advance as the skill and energy of the working masses were concentrated on ending Albania's backwardness. In May 1946 the agrarian reform law was modified to reduce the holdings of those who cultivated the land themselves to 12 acres and to expropriate altogether those who did not. In this way some 430,000 acres of land, 474,000 olive trees and 6,000 draught animals became available for redistribution to land-poor peasant families. In July along with the nationalisation of the banks, new bank notes with five times the value of the old were introduced and no family was allowed to exchange more old money than the equivalent of 100 units of the new currency. In August the law on the general economic state plan was adopted. The Planning Commission, which had been set up the year before, was reorganised and work was begun on drafting the economic plan for 1947.

As a result of the socialisation of the principal means of production and agrarian reform the Albanian economy, at the time of the first two-year plan for all round advance, consisted of three forms – socialist, small-scale commodity production and free enterprise.

The socialist form included industry, mining, power stations, transport and communications, the financial system, foreign trade, internal wholesale trade, state retail trading enterprises, state farms, state machine and tractor stations which enabled the co-operatives to begin the mechanisation of agricultural production, forests, waters and subsoil resources. This form dominated the economy and accounted for 95% of all industrial production.

Small-scale commodity production included the employment of poor and middle peasants in agriculture and artisans in handicraft production, all living on the income from their own work. This form represented about 80% of the total volume of production.

The capitalist form included rich peasants in the countryside, merchants, traders and the owners of small businesses employing hired labour. They were primarily concerned with the distribution of goods and though they accounted for only 5% of the volume of production, they handled 80% of the retail trade.

These three forms of economy corresponded to the three social classes – the working class, the working peasantry and the bourgeoisie. Already the bourgeoisie had become a secondary class in terms of economic power but there were other ways in which they would struggle to maintain their influence, mainly in the educational and cultural fields where they had certain initial advantages and, of course, they would always have the backing of world capitalism which would continue to bring pressure to bear on socialist Albania.

Later, in January 1949, when a new system of procurement and supply was introduced by the Central Committee to strengthen and improve the economic relations between town and countryside, the three kinds of markets established reflected these three economic forms. The state-guaranteed market supplied goods at fixed prices to working people on the basis of ration cards; the barter market supplied peasants with industrial commodities in exchange for their agricultural surpluses; and the free market served those in town and country whose needs were not met by the other two markets because they were not supplied with ration cards or were not engaged in co-operative agricultural production. Prices in the free market were much higher than in others and in this way money accumulated by rich peasants and capitalist elements would be gradually mopped up.

During 1947 state industrial enterprises were put on a self-supporting basis and were required to cover all the expenses of production together with a surplus for accumulation out of their revenues. The main form of budget income was derived from taxation on the turn over of economic

enterprises. The artisan co-operatives were required to lay aside part of their profits for expansion and the remuneration of members was put on a socialist basis. The buying and selling co-operatives were charged not only with supplying the countryside with industrial goods but also with accumulating agricultural products for the regular supply of cities.

These measures did not solve all the problems of socialist growth by any means and, particularly, on questions like the procurement of food grain much more experience would be required in order to avoid the development of new contradictions between town and countryside; but the basis had none the less been laid for a remarkably rapid advance out of Albania's old economic backwardness.

Where before the war the majority of workshops employed fewer than 25 workers, by 1965 less than 1% of Albanian workers were employed in such small concerns; from 4½% of the total income then represented by industry the percentage had grown to over 55%; and this growth rate was assured by a steady increase in means of production at a rate of some 65-70% as against a 30-35% rise in consumer goods – which is the form socialist accumulation takes.

The economic base was able to sustain increasingly large units of production like the big oil refineries, mechanised copper, chrome and iron-nickel mines, the great Stalin and Mao Tsetung textile mills, the Hammer and Sickle knitting mills, huge cement factories and chemical works for the production of fertilisers, the tractor spare parts factory at Tirana and gigantic hydro-power stations like the Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels plants in the north, and Joseph Stalin in the south and the new Vau i Dejes (Deja Ford) station on the Drin River which produces over one billion Kw/H.

The rate of annual increase of industrial production has been over 15%, reaching in 1967 a level 44 times that of 1938, and in under 25 years the national income has grown to more than five times its original size.

Albania, the most backward country in Europe, has left most European countries far behind in its rate of development.

From a country which had to import all sorts of industrial goods Albania now exports nine times the amount of goods

Average General Development Rate of Industry (1951-1966)

Albania	15.0
Yugoslavia	9.9
Greece	8.3
Italy	8.2
Bulgaria	13.6
Rumania	13.2
Britain	3.1
Soviet Union	10.6
France	5.6
United States	4.7

Increase in Industrial Production (1938 = 100%)

	1950	*1960*
Albania	435	2621
Yugoslavia	170	444
Greece	107	242
Italy	126	295
Bulgaria	312	1236
Rumania	147	500
Britain	133	181
Soviet Union	222	677
France	120	214
United States	232	337

as before the war and half of those exports are industrial products. Planning is doing away with the disproportionate development of different regions. Hundreds of new industrial workshops, factories, power stations and mines have been established in economically backward areas and new towns have sprung up like Stalin, Bulqiza, Patos, Memaliaz, Cerrik, Maliq and Laç. The need for technicians and specialists has been met by creating the institutions to train them and in 1967 alone more than 1400 graduated from advanced technological centres – four times the number sent abroad for training in the whole 15 year period of Zogist rule.

How has it been possible for such a tiny country, encircled by enemies, to resist all the pressures brought to bear by imperialist countries, the betrayals of revisionist countries and to achieve such a record of social and industrial progress?

The answer is the same as to the question of how it was possible to defeat a vastly superior invasion force by mobilising the courage, energy and skills of the people who by relying on their own efforts were able, in the one case, to free their country, in the other, to develop and industrialise it.

The importance of self-reliance is based on the fundamental Marxist principle that changes are brought about directly by internal causes while external causes, the condition of changes, only become operative through those internal causes. 'Contradictoriness within a thing is the fundamental cause of its development, while its interrelations and interreactions with other things are secondary causes.'

Of course a country as small as Albania could not aim at setting up a wholly independent economy with all branches of machine-making and heavy industry developed to the point where every possible need could be met. But self-reliance does not mean self-sufficiency. By relying on their own efforts and making the fullest use of all their resources the Albanian people create the conditions for trading on the basis of equality with other countries and achieving a relationship of mutual support and collaboration with socialist countries. They do not neglect the external factor but they know that what they produce at home is of decisive importance while what they import is secondary.

As Mehmet Shehu explains it: 'Abiding by the principle of self-reliance does not mean that we should lock ourselves inside our national hull and ignore advanced foreign experience, nor should we ignore the international aid of friendly countries. On the contrary, we should make a correct appraisal of and grasp the positive experience of others and profit from the international aid of our real friends for building socialism in our own country. . . .'

This self-reliance, this mobilisation of the energy, skills and creative ability of all the working people, depends on the socialist system which makes it possible for everyone to contribute the best he has to offer to the general good of Albanian society. At the First Congress of the Party of Labour in 1948, Enver Hoxha said: 'The Albanian people who have heroically fought for the liberation of their country and for their democratic people's power have thought it best

that they should base their aspirations for marching forward, first and foremost, on their own inexhaustible forces. They are conscious that, however great their sacrifices may be, they are working for themselves and not for others. They are working for their Party and people's power which will surely lead them on the road to well-being and socialism.'

Socialist economic planning takes the same form of democratic centralism, of the mass line, as every other aspect of Albanian life. It is based on the maximum participation of the masses. People at their places of work, in city quarters and villages, in their various mass organisations discuss the draft directives and make their remarks and suggestions – often to the effect that the targets are not high enough and more could be accomplished in a particular sector of agriculture or industry than has been called for. This two way process between state planning committee and working people continues till the whole plan in all its details is finally agreed. The meetings of working collectives on the fourth Five Year plan, which ended in 1970 with greater increases than those proposed in every branch of the economy, involved 174,000 discussions in which 141,000 proposals were put forward. The fact that state plans for economic and cultural development 'bear the marks of the people' guarantees their being successfully put into effect.

Chapter Thirteen

Development of Agriculture

Before the war the backwardness of Albania was nowhere more apparent than in the agricultural system, still based on feudal or semi-feudal relations of production with the addition of some exploitation of the peasantry by city capitalists. Landlords and wealthy proprietors took half of the produce in high rents and the rest was subject to the further depredation of having to be exchanged at unfavourable prices fixed by the merchants. The labouring peasantry was heavily in debt to usurers charging fantastically high interest rates. The land was tilled with primitive implements by inefficient methods and agricultural production was abysmally low.

During the war the support of the poor peasants for the liberation struggle was won by the promise of land reform as part of the revolutionary transformation of the country. In every liberated area the grain depots of the land owners were confiscated and rent and debts were cancelled. In the first days of independence the state collected grain to prevent speculation; the tithe system was abolished; all debts were officially annulled and what rents remained were fixed at a low limit.

The agrarian reform, carried out in only 14 months during 1945 and 1946, was the first revolution in Albania's countryside. Any remaining feudal relations were abolished, land was distributed free of charge to the peasants who tilled it and the landlord class was liquidated. The liquidation of a class does not mean, of course, the annihilation of the individuals making it up – any more than the liquidation of the class of reckless drivers by disqualification would mean

anything but putting an end to that form of anti-social behaviour.

The agrarian reform was a necessary condition for the socialist transformation of the countryside but was not in itself a socialist measure. That could only come with the collectivisation of agriculture. Only by collectivisation could the yield in a country with a fragmented peasant economy be materially increased and, equally important, only collectivisation could prevent the restoration of capitalism which for the time being was held at bay by legal restrictions on the transfer of land.

Collectivisation of agriculture provided the resolution of the contradiction between socialist industry, based on social ownership of the means of production, and a small-scale peasant economy based on private ownership of the means of production. As long as this contradiction remained, the two realms of production, industrial and agricultural, were bound to develop not only at different rates but even in different political directions. Socialist industry was being supplied with advanced technical equipment while small-scale peasant agriculture used the most primitive techniques; industry was centralised and brought under a state plan for co-ordinated development while the peasant economy could only develop spontaneously; and on the political side the liquidation of the bourgeoisie in the cities was linked to the creation of a socialist base for industry while in the countryside private ownership on however restricted a scale could only go on generating capitalism day by day. If what amounted to two different economies were allowed to exist side by side, there could be no general socialist advance for the whole country, no 'walking on two legs' as the co-ordinated progress of industry and agriculture has been called, and inevitably there would be a drift back to capitalism which would gradually erode the socialist sector.

This contradiction between town and countryside, going so much deeper than just the relative comforts and amenities, could only be eliminated by collectivisation of agriculture – Albania's second revolution in the rural areas. Collectivisation was brought about by transforming the private property of small producers into socialist property through the voluntary

(top) Families celebrating International Workers' Day in Tirana.

bottom) The Albanian football team, the 'Partisans', scores a goal against a Swedish team in a match in the Qemal Stafa Stadium.

Holiday accommodation for workers on the Ionian Sea at Dhermi.

Reunion of comrades at the house in Tirana where the Party of Labour of Albania was founded on November 8th 1941. All played active parts in the war of liberation and are now leading members of the State and Party. Enver Hoxha (second from right) is flanked on his left by Mehmet Shehu and on his right by Hysni Kapo.

Students on the steps of Tirana University. Before the war over 80% of the people of Albania were illiterate and it was the only country in Europe with no university.

Enver Hoxha and Vasil Shanto during Albania's war of resistance. Vasil Shanto was killed in action in 1944.

Enver Hoxha with Maria Biba, whose father, Party Secretary for Mirdita District, was killed in 1949 by a band of traitors in the pay of Albania's imperialist enemies. Maria is now vice-Director of the middle school which bears her father's name, Bardhok Biba.

Mao Tsetung and Enver Hoxha. The comradeship of two peoples is in the warm personal greetings of these two socialist leaders.

co-operation of peasant owners. They united their land, shared tools and farm animals, and distributed the produce according to the work days each had put in, thus securing the advantages of larger-scale production without re-introducing exploitation in any form. With the creation of collective property the co-ordination of individual interests with collective interests and of collective interests with the interests of society as a whole became possible.

The Party of Labour did not leave the formation of co-operatives to spontaneous development but carried out a campaign of political education among the peasants encouraging them to combine their individual holdings into socialist units. At the same time collectivisation of agriculture was not brought about by administrative fiats but by the free choice of the working peasantry once they had become convinced of the superiority of the collective over individual plots. Optional participation in co-operatives has always been one of the basic principles of their organisation.

Having provided political support for the collectivisation movement the socialist state offered practical economic assistance as well. Machine and tractor stations were established for the use of the bigger collectives; agrarian credits were granted on favourable terms and selected seeds, chemical fertilisers, improved stock and insecticides were provided.

With the success of the first collectives voluntarily set up in 1946, co-operatives soon spread all over the country. But just as the first agrarian revolution of land reform had involved class struggle against landlords, so the second agrarian revolution of collectivisation involved class struggle against former rich peasants or kulaks who had hoped to acquire for themselves much of the redistributed land as the system of tiny private holdings proved uneconomic. In the course of this struggle against the kulaks, the poor and middle peasants changed their own class character from that of individual peasants to that of a co-operative peasantry. The socialist state helped the co-operative peasantry in their class conflict by isolating the kulaks politically and taxing them economically; but the state could only intervene usefully to the extent that the working masses themselves

were prepared to struggle.

There were set-backs when the kulaks, no longer a strong enough force to oppose the agrarian measures of the people's state openly, exploited ideological weaknesses among the peasants and tried to incite them to resist procurement policies with which they themselves complied. They gave currency to the idea that the new socialist system might be good for city workers and employees but had little to offer the working peasants who were expected to assume an unequal burden in the general transformation of society as a whole. Since the revolution in the countryside had not yet resulted in obvious material advantages and since the local Party organisations did not always successfully counter these attacks, some peasants, even some secretaries of the nascent co-operatives, fell into the trap set for them by the kulaks and retreated in an opportunistic way from the application of procurement ordinances.

In an open letter 'On Some Problems in the Countryside' published in *Zeri i Popullit* in March, 1949, Enver Hoxha explained the necessity for the new agrarian system and the perspectives it opened up for agricultural development in relation to the whole socialist economy of Albania. He pointed out that the main problem was not the procurement ordinances themselves, but the failure of Party organisations in the countryside to establish the sort of links with the masses which would have prevented their being misled.

Following this criticism the Party committees shook off their defeatist attitude, purged themselves of any idea that the answer to the country's economic difficulties lay in obtaining foreign aid and supported the efforts at the centre to build up larger reserves of industrial goods to be exchanged for agricultural products. The Council of Ministers for its part allocated special credits for the autumn sowing of 1949 and reduced procurement quotas through a reclassification of land.

In the improved political climate the co-operative movement forged ahead. By 1950 there were 90 co-operatives, by 1955 there were 318 and by 1960 there were 1,482. At the end of 1967, following on the incorporation of smaller units into larger and more economic aggregates, there were 1,208

co-operatives covering 99% of the land surface and including 98% of all peasant families.

Initially co-operatives were formed around each separate village and averaged from 250 to 500 acres in extent; but the further development of productive forces and the economic use of tractor stations required the enlargement of co-operatives, and by the end of 1958 the size of lowland co-operatives averaged 1250 acres, those in hillier regions 750 acres and there were even co-operatives ranging from 1750 to 2500 acres. This voluntary merging of smaller co-operatives has made possible a better utilisation of the capital provided by the state and a better distribution of available man power and mechanical implements. These larger co-operatives were also able to carry out more extensive projects of land improvement and reclamation. During the third five-year plan (1961-1965) more than 140 reservoirs were built by co-operatives. In the Dibra district alone irrigation was extended to an additional 7500 acres and vast previously uncultivable tracts were planted with fruit trees.

The evidence for the success of the way in which co-operatives were established – propagating the idea of the superiority of socialised agriculture and waiting for the peasants themselves to combine their holdings co-operatively – is that there have been no withdrawals from the collectives the peasants freely entered into and remained free to leave if they wished. In the formation of a co-operative all land is pooled and all farm property is handed over to the Committee of Estimation, appointed by the General Meeting which is the co-operative's democratic assembly. The member whose property is being assessed takes part in the deliberations of the Committee and the agreed total value of the property – farm implements, draft animals, wagons, seeds – is repaid in yearly installments.

From the collective land each family is given a plot to cultivate in addition to the ground immediately surrounding their dwelling place. The size of the plot, which varies with the size of the family and with the difference in fertility between lowland and mountainous regions, is fixed by the General Meeting – as are the numbers of cattle, sheep, goats and pigs which can be kept privately. Houses and their

furnishings, sheds and tools required for working the private plots do not become collective property, though it has been customary for members of the co-operative, using collectively-owned implements, to help each other on their personal holdings thus extending the co-operative principle even to these privately-owned allotments.

Indeed, as socialist relations of production have developed in the countryside the private plot has diminished in importance. Ratios between incomes from the collective economy and from small individual holdings have altered substantially in favour of collective income, and co-operative members have become convinced through their own experience that the main source of uninterrupted improvement in their standard of living, both now and still more in the future, is their collective property, not their private plots and the marginal income derived from them. Along with this economic development has gone ideological education in socialist morality, putting the general interest above personal interest. As a result of this strengthening of class consciousness among the working peasantry, underwritten by the material advantages of collective agriculture, members of the co-operatives have voluntarily reduced their individual plots and, in many cases, given them up altogether.

All members enjoy the fullest democratic rights as belonging to the General Meeting which elects the executive committee and its chairman who are responsible for direction and guidance in the co-operative's day to day conduct of its affairs. The General Meeting demands and receives regular accounts from its agents on the executive committee and can dismiss before the expiry of his term of office any person who has lost the confidence of the members of the co-operative.

Everyone is paid according to the amount of work done, but recently there has been a growing tendency to assess work done on the basis of collective rather than individual quotas. Such a system of remuneration better serves the spirit of team work and is more consistent with a socialist attitude toward labour. When co-operatives have been combined into larger units, differences in the fertility of the various sections may have been reflected in differences in payments; but these

distinctions have been abolished by the voluntary action of the co-operative peasants now part of the same enlarged economic community.

The larger the co-operative the more economic the utilisation of machines and tractors. In 1938 there were only 30 tractors in the whole country. Today, with more than 10,000 tractors available for use in 30 machine and tractor stations, there is one tractor for every 125 acres of tilled land. These stations provide the mechanical equipment for carrying out 95% of the ploughing, 80% of the sowing, 55% of the reaping and 85% of the threshing. From being able to perform only a limited number of operations, mainly in connection with ploughing, the machine and tractor stations now carry out a wide variety of functions ranging from deep ploughing to mechanised shearing. The co-operatives pay the stations for their work either in farm produce or money.

The workers in the machine and tractor stations, whose conditions of socialised labour are comparable to those of factory workers, in their relationship with co-operative farmers develop the economic ties between the working class and the labouring peasantry and strengthen their political alliance. The stations are an ideological and organisational force in the countryside, giving a socialist direction to agriculture by the state ownership of the principle means of production as in industry, providing co-operative members with the latest methods and most up-to-date equipment and raising the general level of co-operative production by giving special attention and assistance to those that are economically weaker.

In certain of the larger combined co-operatives the state invests money and the return on these investments is allowed to remain in the co-operative to stimulate further development. Not only is this a step in the transition from co-operative property relations to the higher socialist stage of state property relations but also those who administer the funds in the interest of both state and co-operative are state employees, like teachers, doctors and nurses, and thus increase the numbers within the co-operatives whose conditions of service are the same as workers in the towns.

With the increase of production there has been a consider-

able improvement in the welfare and richness of life of co-operative members. In place of the old sooty cottages new dwellings have sprung up everywhere and now more than half of the peasant families live in houses constructed since collectivisation. Albania is one of the few countries in the world where there is no dwelling, however remote, without electricity, the rural electrification scheme having been completed more than a year ahead of schedule. 'The light of socialism shines all over the republic – in every one of Albania's 2,550 villages.' The credits advanced to the co-operatives for the electrification of the countryside, some 130 million leks, have been converted into free grants and recently a full state pension scheme has been extended to all agricultural co-operatives. Co-operative centres have assumed the character of new, well-planned small towns, each with its infirmaries, maternity homes, eight-grade schools, gymnasia, theatres, cultural centres and artisan shops. Fewer and fewer amenities to be found in the larger cities are absent from these hubs of rural life.

Out of land confiscated from foreign companies or reclaimed by draining swamps have been created state farms which, like the tractor stations, are based on state-owned rather than co-operative-owned property. Agricultural workers on the state farms receive a regular cash wage like bench hands. These farms have more specialised functions like cultivating new varieties of cereals, meeting the needs of large cities and industrial centres for vegetables and fruits or developing new strains of live stock. There are at present 32 of these socially-advanced state farms which have become agricultural schools for experimenting with the latest techniques, training members of the co-operatives in new and improved methods of farming and breeding and acting as a vanguard in the drive for rural development.

Yields on the state farms are phenomenally high, 22 times more cereals and four times as much milk being produced over a 15-year period and cotton and sugar beet production being increased by some 70%. Fig and citrus trees have been planted over wide areas of formerly uncultivable land and extensive olive groves cover the hills above Elbasan, Vlora and Berat. Large herds of selected breeds of cattle like Jersey

and Osterlitz and great flocks of improved breeds of sheep have been carefully built up.

Not only is Albania very mountainous, only 40% of the land surface being normally considered as cultivable at all, but much of the more fertile lowlands were swampy and undrained at the time of liberation and the coastal plain generally was subject to flood and drought. Large drainage and irrigation projects were an urgent necessity for increasing agricultural production. The Maliqi and Terbufi lagoons were drained and huge irrigation schemes were carried out around Korça, Fier, Lezha and other towns on the plains. More than 500,000 acres of new land have been reclaimed and more than 600,000 acres put under irrigation, giving Albania one of the highest proportions of irrigated land in Europe. Further schemes include the drainage of the Kakariqi swamp in the north and the Dropulli plain in the south while irrigation canals many miles long flowing at heights above 6,000 feet are being constructed in the mountainous regions.

In socialist countries there is no such thing as 'uneconomic' land in the sense that a capitalist farmer could not make an immediate profit by working it. Profitability is judged by what is beneficial in the long run to society as a whole. In 1966 the Party advanced the slogan 'Let us take to the hills and mountains and make them as beautiful and fertile as the plains'. As one travels in the summer along roads cutting through the rugged uplands one sees people, mainly young people, working high up on the steep slopes, terracing the ground for planting orchards and vineyards. And in the winter the peasants of the highlands work to snatch additional stretches of fertile land from the rock-strewn folds and degraded forests.

The uneven pattern of capitalist development, constantly reproducing both inside and outside national boundaries the basic imbalance of over-concentrated metropolis and deprived environs, is precisely the opposite of the socialist pattern of evening out differences and resolving contradictions between town and country, between more and less favoured regions. Speaking on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of liberation, Enver Hoxha made just this point. 'While fighting for high yields in the lowland areas, we do not

neglect the struggle for the rapid development of agriculture in the hilly and mountainous areas – just as, attaching great importance to industrialisation, we by no means underrate the needs of the countryside. We do not advance by the depopulation of villages but by their growth as the centres of a flourishing agriculture. Preserving the right proportions is essential to the cause of socialist construction. Allowing discrepancies to develop is fraught with grave economic, political and ideological consequences.'

In part the elimination of discrepancies is achieved by state support in the way of special drainage and irrigation funds which were increased by six times in the fourth five-year plan ending in 1970. Work is proceeding on 230 reservoirs, mainly in the poorer regions. But the people themselves also contribute to the social process of making up for natural deficiencies. Not only have experienced farm workers gone up into the hills to share their expertise, but also the older co-operatives in the plains have made voluntary gifts of 5,250 cattle, 36,700 sheep and 8,800 goats to the newer co-operatives formed in difficult circumstances.

The problem of maintaining a correct relationship between agricultural and industrial advance as part of the planned elimination of differences between town and country has been a stubborn one requiring constant attention. During the first five-year plan (1951-1955) it became obvious that the backwardness of Albania's agriculture had been underestimated and the proposed increases in production were not being realised. In 1953 the Central Committee took special steps to deal with the situation. Some of the investment allocated to the industrial sector was switched to agriculture, arrears in the quotas of food grains and livestock products fixed for the previous four years were written off and unpaid taxes owed by co-operative members were cancelled. The discrepancy between the comparatively low prices of agricultural products and the high prices of industrial goods was adjusted and the movement was begun of shifting plants and workshops, particularly those engaged in processing farm products or making farm tools, into the countryside. The buying and selling co-operatives established accumulating points as near as possible to the centres of agricultural

production and assumed responsibility for the transportation of produce to the towns.

In subsequent five-year plans the need to check the disproportionate rate of increase in industry and agriculture has been taken into account by fixing a higher rate of development for the agricultural sector. For example in the fourth five-year plan (1966-1970) the following differentials were proposed and achieved in narrowing down the distinctions between urban and rural conditions:

	Percentage increase	
	Industry (city)	Agriculture (village)
Over-all production	50-54	71-76
Average annual rate of increase	8.7	11.5
State investment	40	68
Real income per capita	9-11	20-25
New dwelling houses	5	11

As a result of intensive efforts to improve and develop the rural economy, agricultural production has increased by four times the pre-war level. Up to 1938 the main agricultural revenues came from live stock, about 51% of the total income compared with 43% from farming, while fruit growing and forestry together only accounted for 6%. Now 61% of the rural income is provided by farm crops and the percentages of fruit-growing and forestry have increased. Before the war the only industrial crops were tobacco and cotton. The production of these crops has been enormously increased, tobacco by nine times as much as in 1938, by obtaining higher yields rather than by an extension of acreage. To them have been added sugar beets, sunflowers, sage, vallonia and many other crops having industrial or medicinal uses. The nitrate plant at Fier and the superphosphate plant at Laç have made Albania one of the most advanced countries in Europe in the use of chemical fertilisers.

The state accumulation agencies are able to handle for the internal market or for export the greatest increases of various crops produced by the co-operatives, even when an unexpec-

tedly large harvest is gathered as with the 1967 superabundance of olives. Grapes too, the production of which has greatly increased every year, are entirely absorbed by distribution throughout the country or conversion into wine. Huge refrigeration plants have been constructed in all the major cities for the preservation of perishables like meat, fruits and vegetables. In one year, from 1955 to 1957, agricultural production rose by 15% and in October, 1957, the rationing system was abolished altogether and there was a general lowering of prices.

But the problem of differences between town and country is not only economic. It is ideological as well. The struggle to eliminate this contradiction, therefore, takes the form of educating the peasantry in new socialist attitudes toward private and collective interests, toward the relationship of the individual to the state and society as a whole – attitudes which are directly connected with the increase in production made possible by these very socialist relations. Special efforts have been made to eradicate the regressive customs and traditions, the religious prejudices and superstitions to which people in the countryside were the particular heirs. Along with scientific methods of working the land has been taught a scientific perspective generally and with recognition of the practical necessity of the worker-peasant alliance has been taught the world outlook of the proletariat.

Ideological attack is specially directed against customs, prejudices and superstitions that harm the people's health and their economy, that keep alive the old patriarchal relations of inequality in the family, that abuse the rights of women, lowering their dignity and obstructing their active participation in the economic, political and social life of the countryside. To help in this struggle of ideas and attitudes young people and workers go voluntarily into the country to live and work side by side with the peasants for considerable periods. There are exchanges of groups of people between upland and lowland regions, between districts of the north and the south – so that by the sharing of experiences and the spreading of new ideas the ideological education of the peasantry can be advanced and they will become progressively proletarianised. In the cities courses have been started

for training women from the co-operatives in various skills and professions, equipping them to go back and play their part in raising the economic and cultural level of life in the rural communities.

Ultimately the decisive factor in the great transformation of agriculture is man – the new man of a socialist conscience and revolutionary spirit. 'It is man,' Enver Hoxha told the Fifth Congress of the Party in 1966, 'who makes a place thrive and our mountains will be transformed by the hands and the creative minds of our people.'

It is in freeing man to play this creative productive role that the Party and people have achieved such results and Enver Hoxha could say in all truth at the time of the celebrations of the Twentyfifth Anniversary of liberation: 'All of us have still fresh in our minds the thatch-roofed huts and the oppressed peasants of Myzeqe, the hungry highlands of Puka and Dukagjin, the whole of our suffering and toiling peasantry. We remember the swamps and marshes which flooded some of our best lands from Buna to the Vurgu of Delvina. But all that belongs to history, to the past. Today all the new co-operative countryside is shining in the light of socialism. . . . The successes and victories achieved are closely connected with the Party line for the correct solution of the peasant problem which is among the most important and the most complicated problems for every country embarking on the road of socialist construction.'

Chapter Fourteen

Development of Industry and the Relation between Economic Base and Social Superstructure

The commitment of the Albanian people, once they had liberated themselves, to the task of transforming their country directly from an economically backward semi-feudal state into a socialist state, without passing through the phase of advanced capitalist industrialisation, posed as the most immediate and urgent post-war problem the rapid development of a socialist industry.

But industrialisation is through and through a class issue and the decision to raise the whole industrial structure on a socialist foundation from which exploitation of one class by another has been absolutely excluded involves a number of social corollaries about the ways in which capital is accumulated, the kinds of incentive offered to workers and even the international context in which industrialisation takes place. First and foremost of course, is involved the political question of how it can be assured that the beneficiaries of industrialisation are and will remain the great mass of the working people who by their creative skill and labour make industrial development possible. It *can* only be assured if state power is firmly in the hands of the working people. Between societies based on exploitation, like feudalism or capitalism, and fully communist society in which there are no classes at all there is a period of revolutionary transformation of the former into the latter. Marx in the Critique of the Gotha Programme had laid down the necessary political character of the transitory period of socialism. 'The state of this period cannot be other than the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat'; and this was the nature of the Albanian state created by the Party and people on winning independence.

The primitive accumulation which enabled countries like

Britain to embark on the capitalist mode of production took the form partly of saving by the early entrepreneurs to invest in the expansion of manufacturing but, much more, of extracting loot from the colonies which flowed back to the mother country to be turned into capital. In so far as thrift and self-denial entered into the amassing of capital they were reflected in the ideology of puritanism; but this curtailment of present pleasures for future satisfactions at compound interest was rooted in a purely individualistic ethic of getting ahead and securing the personal power money in a capitalist society gives. In so far as the gross exploitation of colonial peoples provided the capital for industrialisation it was reflected in an ideology of national and racial chauvinism.

In a socialist country like Albania the accumulation for investment in industrialisation came partly from the expropriation of the bourgeoisie, landlords and foreign capitalists but, much more, and on a continuing basis, from the savings of the working people by way of the creation of surpluses in industrial and co-operative enterprises a large proportion of which was devoted to investment in industrial expansion rather than to simply increasing the production of consumers' goods. In the last five year period, for example, 28.2% of the national income was set aside for investment, primarily in means of production, and 71.8% was used for social and personal consumption. But this saving was collective, corresponding to the socialist morality of putting the interests of society as a whole and even of generations yet to come above immediate individual interests.

Even more important in the development of capitalism than primitive accumulation is the creation of an exploitable labour force – workers who, in Marx's words, are free to sell their labour power and have been 'freed' of anything else to dispose of. People in Britain, for example, were driven off the land by Enclosure Acts, artisans were deprived of the tools of their trade and an industrial army of 'hands' was formed which had no alternative to their recruitment into factories and mills on terms fixed by the owners, producing goods which, above the value necessary to sustain themselves and reproduce a new generation of workers, belonged entirely to the owner. The only incentive for working remained the

material one of work or starve and the cash nexus became the dominant form of human relationships generally—reflected in the social phenomenon of alienation or commodity fetishism.

Socialist Albania was faced with the same problem of finding workers to man the new industrial enterprises required for economic growth – and in a country where the bulk of the labour force had been employed in agriculture and where there were no trained technicians nor specialists to speak of. Not only was force or pressure ruled out by the very nature of the people's political power so firmly established, but even dependence on material incentives could only result in grosser inequality than was compatible with socialist relations of production, leading eventually to the formation of a new privileged class and the creation of a social climate of competitive individualism favourable to the restoration of capitalism. People could only be drawn to the great tasks of socialist industrialisation by their conviction that its benefits would accrue to them and their children as collective owners of the means of production and not find their way, as profits, into the pockets of individuals. The main incentive for the exertion of their energy and the application of their skills was socialist emulation. The state for its part legislated for the well-being of workers and tapped a relatively new source of creative labour by establishing the necessary conditions for women to play an equal part with men in the work of factories and mills. The educational institutions required for training specialists in various branches of industry were set up so that Albania would not be dependent on foreign experts.

The determination to defend and develop socialism not only meant that no assistance could be expected from capitalist countries but even that Albania's economy would have to be expanded and strengthened under the conditions of a virtual blockade with immediate neighbours like Yugoslavia and Greece, both now part of the capitalist world, helping to tighten the ring. Only from other socialist countries, mainly, in the early stages of industrialisation, the Soviet Union, and, afterwards, the People's Republic of China, could Albania hope to receive or risk accepting credits and technical assistance.

The stages of the development of industry in Albania began with the two year plan (1949-1950) which laid the foundation for the rapid economic advance realised in successive five year planning periods, the fourth of these having been completed in 1970 with planned increases in all sectors either fulfilled or overfulfilled.

During the two year plan large projects were begun like the Lenin Hydro-power plant to meet the industrial and domestic needs of the Tirana district, the Stalin Textile Mills and the Maliq Sugar Refinery. Of the total investment in this period 47% was devoted to the development of industry with 20% going to the improvement and expansion of mining Albania's rich sub-soil resources. By 1950 general industrial output had been raised to over four times the output in 1938.

With the first five year plan (1952-1955) the development of industry gathered such momentum that by the end of the period Albania had been transformed from a backward agricultural into an agrarian industrial country. The Lenin power plant and Stalin textile mills were completed on schedule and many new industrial projects were realised — the wood working mills at Elbasan, the cement factory at Vlora, cotton gins at Fier and Rogozhina, the Shkodra tobacco fermentation plant and woollen textile and furniture factories in Tirana. About 150 new state enterprises in all were commissioned and completed and the mining and petroleum industries were further developed. Overall industrial output rose to over 11 times that of 1938 and what it had taken Albania an entire year to produce before the war was turned out in 35 days in 1955.

During the second five year plan (1956-1960) the average annual rate of increase of industrial production rose to the phenomenally high figure of 20%. The Karl Marx hydro-electric plant was constructed on the Mati River, an oil refinery was built at Cerrik, canneries at Vlora, Elbasan, Korça and Shkodra, glass and velvet factories, a porcelain plant and a food processing combine at Tirana, brick factories at many places, a copper enrichment plant at Kurbnesh and a whole network of high tension power lines were all completed. Industrial production as a whole was 25 times that of 1938 and it took only 15 days in 1960 to equal

the total production of 1938. Socialist relations of production were so firmly established that 99% of industrial output, 100% of wholesale trade and 90% of retail trade, were all in the socialist sector of the economy.

In the third five year plan (1961-1965) the greater emphasis on creating means of production was reflected in a number of major projects like the construction of the Engels and Stalin hydro-electric plants, the Elbasan iron smelting plant and the copper smelting plant at Gjegjan, the copper wire factory at Shkodra, the Tirana tractor spare parts factory, three paper mills, new mines and the first large chemical plants for producing fertilisers – in all 430 new works instead of the 400 planned for. In spite of the fact that it was during this period that Khrushchev not only broke off unilaterally all economic agreements between the Soviet Union and Albania, but also, in effect, joined the imperialist countries in their economic blockade, industrial production rose to 35 times that of 1938 with 11 days sufficing to turn out the goods which had then required a whole year to produce. Industry represented 57% of total output as opposed to 8% in 1938. National income as a whole was 536% as compared with 1938 and per capita income 300%.

The fourth five year plan (1966-1970) took its character from Enver Hoxha's political report to the Fifth Congress of the Albanian Party of Labour on November 1, 1966, in which he outlined the main tasks of the plan, spoke of the need for improving the work of the Party, strengthening its ties with the masses and rooting out bureaucratic methods and urged the deepening of the ideological and cultural revolution so that the social superstructure would conform to and defend the socialist economic base – particularly guarding against that 'off shoot and ally of bourgeois ideology – revisionism'. Among the industrial enterprises set up in this period were sheet metal plants, nitrate and phosphate fertiliser plants, cement factories, a new caustic soda plant, a glass factory at Kavaja, a plastics plant at Durrës and the huge, fully-automated Mao Tsetung textile mills near Berat. The great hydro-electric plant at Vau i Dejes was opened ahead of schedule at the time of the Sixth Congress in November, 1971, and work has already begun on an ever

larger plant higher up the Drin river. There was a great upsurge in housing construction on the basis of voluntary contributions of labour by the people and the supply of materials by the state, over 20,000 new houses out of the 73,000 completed within the five years being built in this way. Even before the end of the period, in 1968, industrial output was already 52 times that of 1938 and by 1970 a single week's output was equal to 1938's total production. The national income as a whole and per capita had risen to 806% and 392% respectively compared with pre-war and were 55% and 17% higher than 1965.

Albania is fortunate in its mineral wealth -- petroleum, gas, chrome, iron, nickel, copper, coal, bauxite and bitumen to mention only the most important. It was this that first attracted the interest of foreign countries and geological surveys of a superficial nature were carried out by their experts to discover how accessible was this subsoil wealth for exploitation. During the pre-war period monopoly-capitalists took advantage of the 'open door' policy of the Zogist regime to exploit these riches; but since the extraction industries set up were for no other purpose than to make profits for foreign investors they did nothing to create a base for heavy industry in Albania itself.

All these enterprises were nationalised by the people's government in 1944 and work was gradually begun on a thoroughgoing survey of mineral reserves, establishing the presence of oil in lime beds and bringing in seven new fields in addition to those already operating near Patos and Stalin City, discovering big deposits of iron ore containing nickel in the Pogradeç-Elbasan zone, vast reserves of coal in central Albania, copper in the north and developing Bulqiza into one of the richest sources of chrome in the world. Over a million and a quarter tons of crude oil have been extracted by drilling equipment made in Albania and there are five times as many mines as before the war.

Along with this exploration of new sources of mineral wealth has gone the development of processing operations inside the country. There are refineries for producing petrol, benzine, kerosene and coke at Cerrik and Stalin City, and others have recently been constructed. The bulk of mined

The following table shows the percentage increase in total industrial production and in various sections of industry up to 1969 as compared with 1938, on the basis of 1970 prices:

	1938	1950	1955	1960	1965	1969
Total industrial production	1	4.1	11.5	25	34.8	57.5
The oil industry	1	3.7	5.2	21.8	27.5	52.3
Coal	1	11.3	53.7	78.6	106.5	180.8
Chromium	1	7.5	17.4	41.9	44.9	59.3
Copper (as compared with 1946)	-	5.4	6.3	12	61.5	180.5
Electric power	1	2.0	10	24.4	41	95.2
Machine making	1	3.9	9	21.2	44.7	123
Chemical industry (as compared with 1946)	-	12.5	48.5	169	380	2618.8
Building materials	1	3.6	14.6	30.4	37.7	89
Lumber and paper	1	6.4	29.2	64.6	72.2	111
Light industry	1	4	10.6	23.2	31.5	51
Food industry	1	5.7	11.4	23.4	31.5	50

copper is processed in Albania, providing copper wire and various by-products for export. The erection of a metal rolling plant at Elbasan, numerous smelting plants, a foundry for ferrochrome and a steel producing capacity of a million tons a year are all steps toward self-reliance in turning the country's great mineral resources into finished products. The production of fuel is ample to meet all the needs of a rapidly expanding industry.

By 1968 the supply of electric power was already 80 times that available in 1938 – thus well on the way to realising Lenin's slogan that socialism is people's power plus electrification. To the hydro-electric power plants near Tirana and on the Mati River and the thermo-power stations at Stalin City, Vlora, Cerrik and Maliq have now been added the huge Fier thermo-power station with a 100,000 kw capacity as well as the great Mao Tsetung hydro-electric power plant on the Drin River with an annual output of one billion kwh. In 1967 the decision was taken to complete the electrification of all the rural areas by 1971, a project requiring 5,000 miles of cables, 1,600 transformer stations and 160 sub-stations. This extension of electric power to 1,800 villages in every part of the country however remote, was an advance of 14 years on the original plan of completing rural electrification by 1985 and, in fact, was completed in October, 1970, a year ahead of the date fixed by the final plan.

Before the war there were only a few primitive repair shops for motor cars. Now there are over 200 machine shops supplying 70% of the country's needs for spare parts. This branch of industry, 95 times larger than in 1938, is capable of servicing and repairing all types of machines in use. Special attention is given to the production of agricultural machinery – centrifugal pumps, sprinkling equipment, grain threshers, corn shellers, ploughs, harrows, sorting, binding and sowing machines. Also supplied in adequate quantities are conveyors, band saws and circular saws, diesel motors, electric motors, transformers, metal cutting machines and consumers' goods like kitchen utensils. During the fourth five year plan the country's machine-making capacity was doubled.

Chemical production, which did not exist before the war

at all, is the youngest branch of Albanian industry. New enterprises have been started producing pharmaceutical goods, plastic articles and cosmetics; and the development of other industries like glass, textile and oil has depended on the creation of a heavy chemical industry. Three great chemical works, the nitrate fertiliser plant at Fier, the superphosphate plant at Laç and the caustic soda plant at Vlora, are all in full production and by-products like nitric acid, sulphuric acid and oxygen have made Albania self-sufficient in a whole range of industrial chemicals which formerly had to be imported. In one year, 1968, the output of the chemical industry increased by 50 times.

Food processing has developed tremendously from the few olive oil presses, flour mills and cigarette factories existing before the war. The total output of food processing plants in 1938 is achieved in nine days now – an increase of 37 times as much as then. Sugar mills, fruit, vegetable, meat and fish canneries, wine and soft drink distilleries and processing plants for children's food are to be found in every district. The Ali Kemendi combine in Tirana has gained an international reputation for the quality of its exports of tinned and preserved foods and cigarettes are exported from the factories at Gjirokastra, Shkodra, Elbasan and Durrës.

Textiles in the last 30 years have increased by 65 times per capita even though the population has doubled in that period, and from having to import textiles Albania now exports them to a number of European countries.

After the war there was an enormous building programme to restore houses, bridges, roads, ports and mines which had been damaged or destroyed and to construct new factories, cultural centres and public buildings. At the rate of construction in 1938 it would have taken over five centuries to equal the buildings completed in the first two decades of socialist construction. Guided by the slogan 'build faster, cheaper and better' construction workers, during the first five years after the war, rebuilt some 62,000 demolished houses and completed 1,100 new apartment blocks. More than 75,000 new houses were built in rural areas from 1951 to 1965. The state provides long term credits at no interest to enable workers to build their own houses and 30,000 new dwellings have been

completed on this basis. In Tirana alone, mass voluntary work on housing is responsible for the building of 800 apartments a year over and above normal planned construction. The population of Albania is growing so rapidly that housing remains a problem but at present rates of construction the problem will no longer exist in another three or four years. Dwellings which are state property rent at about 3% of the average income and are allocated by the popularly-elected People's Councils according to the number of persons in a family. Those who own their own homes can lease them as long as the rent does not exceed the state norm. After the earthquake in 1967 which caused considerable damage in the eastern part of the country, 6,048 houses and buildings were rebuilt or repaired in 29 days.

Unlike the capitalist system in which large scale production spells ruin for small scale producers, socialist Albania, while creating huge industrial enterprises, has also encouraged and supported handicraft co-operatives, thus preserving and developing traditional skills and techniques. New workshops have been built and equipment supplied to raise 15 fold the 1938 manufacture of such articles as glass ware, wickerwork, carpets, embroidery, jewelry, pottery, briar pipes, fur garments, copper ware and silver filigree work. Examples of the fine workmanship which goes into these goods could be seen at the Olympia Handicrafts Fair in London in 1970 where for the first time Albania exhibited its characteristic arts and crafts in Britain. The handicraft co-operatives also operate repair services in both town and country so that workers and their families can keep their possessions in working order and get full value from their purchases. This repair service now makes up 40% of the work of these co-operatives.

Industrial enterprises in Albania are the property of the people and are run by the class enjoying state power, the workers themselves who, indeed, through their representatives in the Government manage the country's entire economy. But is this merely an ideal or do the workers actually exercise control in the places where they are employed?

The managers of enterprises are appointed by the appro-

priate ministry and are responsible to it for the organisation of production. In this task they are assisted by the Party branch, the trade union and the various workers' collectives in that particular concern. Manager, Party and trade union run the enterprise in compliance with the directives of the current plan on the basis of democratic centralism, combining centralised leadership with the maximum creative participation of workers engaged directly in production.

These managers are the sons and daughters of workers and peasants, many of whom fought in the anti-fascist war. A number of workers who have distinguished themselves on the production line have been promoted to managerial posts. Others, also the sons and daughters of workers and peasants, have been trained in higher institutes of technology where political education in the revolutionary line of the Party has played an important part in fitting them for the responsibilities of management. Managers are not the owners of factories, nor do they have any claim on the profits which the enterprise realises. In fact, managers and workers belong to the same class and their interests, the further development of socialist production for the general good, fully coincide.

The collectives, embodying the closest co-operation of workers and managers, agree in open discussion on the planned tasks for a particular enterprise and this is the basis on which the manager guides production. In these collectives engineering and technical personnel together with workers combine science with practical experience in an all round collaboration for solving production problems, developing new inventions and rationalising work. In the first three years of the fourth plan over 200,000 rationalisation proposals were made of which more than 170,000 were approved and adopted.

All those in responsible posts do no less than a month's practical work in production every year, thus narrowing the distinction between mental and manual labour and enabling leading cadres to be fully acquainted with the practical problems of production, to maintain the closest contact with workers and to eradicate any manifestation of bureaucratism and technocratism. There is a continuous circulation of personnel, shifting those doing office work to production

work and promoting those on the factory floor to positions of leadership. After Enver Hoxha's 1966 Report on the need to deepen the cultural revolution and fight bureaucracy, some 15,000 cadres were released from state and Party office work to participate directly in production.

The workers' collectives control the activity of the managers through regular meetings of a supervisory nature. Those in managerial posts can be called to account for shortcomings or mistakes and, if they persist in them and fail to show signs of improvement, they are dismissed.

Reference has already been made to the 'fletë rrufe' or criticism and self-criticism bulletin boards displayed prominently in every place of work on which workers, individually or collectively, are free to criticise each other or question any aspect of management. Failure of managers to deal adequately with charges against them may and has resulted in loss of post. When the administrator of the Lushnja industrial complex tried to side step an accounting demanded by the workers, the matter was referred to the Party and immediate action was taken. The manager in charge of planning at the Elbasan Forestry Establishment replied to criticisms by forest workers in the Biza division by threatening to close down the division altogether and this conduct was dealt with summarily. Numerous examples could be given of such working class control; but because differences between management and workers do not involve antagonistic class contradictions, they can usually be resolved in collective discussion.

Correct relations between workers on the factory floor and those in leadership positions are maintained by a system of payments in which there is no pronounced disparity. The ratio between low, average and high pay is among the lowest if not the lowest in the world, brought about by consistently lowering the salaries of all high ranking officials including state and Party leaders while improving the rates of pay of those in the medium or lower brackets. Since 1966 when Enver Hoxha at the Fifth Party Congress called for special efforts in implementing socialist principles, higher salaries have been cut twice and there has been a steady rise in lower rates of pay and pensions. Workers themselves have

responded to the urgency of replacing monetary with socialist incentives by giving up of their own free will many supplementary payments above their standard income.

This playing down of material incentives has narrowed the gap between cadres and the working masses, checked the tendency toward officialdom and a contempt for production work and greatly reduced the temptation to seek personal comfort and privileges – all of which involve the bourgeois degeneration of the leadership. At the same time the role of moral incentives, of socialist emulation, has assumed growing importance as the major motivation in the working masses' conscious mobilisation for the advancement of production.

In doing away with anomalies in pay and reducing differentials there has been no intention of imposing a flat mechanical equalisation, ignoring the relation between simple jobs and those involving managerial responsibility, between unqualified and qualified work or between onerous and lighter tasks. The principle for socialist remuneration is 'from each according to his ability and to each according to the work he does'. Not till the period of transition is complete and society has moved into the stage of full communism does the principle become 'from each according to his ability and to each according to his needs'. But in the transitional period differentiation must not be on such a scale as to introduce divisions within the ranks of the working class and it should diminish as non-monetary incentives become stronger.

Because the system of payment is a just reflection of socialist principles, workers, specialists and managers all know each other's rates of pay and talk quite freely about them to anyone interested in how the system works. Some comparative figures in leks per month, the standard unit of Albanian currency, will show the measure of present differentials. At the current rate of exchange a pound sterling is worth about 12 leks; but while the following figures are useful for comparing rates of pay in Albania, they provide no basis for comparing the standard of living of workers in Albania and Britain. This is because all essentials like food, housing and clothes are so very much cheaper in Albania while certain luxury goods tend to be much higher if, indeed, they are available at all.

In the huge Mao Tsetung textile combine at Berat the manager receives 1100 leks a month and the lowest paid workers start at 550. Skilled technicians receive about 750. At the caustic soda factory in Vlora the chief engineer gets 900 leks, the director 1000, those doing light work from 500 to 550 and average workers between 700 and 750. The manager of the copper wire factory in Shkodra gets only 880 leks per month because it is fully-automated and comparatively easy to run, while the workers, 60% of whom are women and young girls, make about 600 leks. All women, who have been drawn into industry in ever increasing numbers, have always received equal pay for equal work. At the tractor spare parts factory in Tirana workers get on the average 600 leks a month, the chief engineer 900 and model workers may make as much as 1000. Workers, invariably men, engaged in particularly hard or hazardous work like mining, heavy loading and unloading, dyeing where lead paints are used, diving or glass smelting, receive more pay, often exceeding the salaries of directors; but there is a continuous movement by the use of new techniques and equipment toward eliminating the heavier and more hazardous jobs.

To compare these payments in industry with those to writers and intellectuals: teachers, depending on qualifications, start at about 550 leks per month, rising at the end of five years to 700 and after 20 years to 750. They receive an additional 20 leks per month if they take posts in rural areas. Full time writers in the Writers Union are paid about 800 leks.

Thus the whole range of payments throughout industry and, indeed, in all other sectors of the economy, fall roughly within limits of from 500 to 1100 leks a month, or a maximum differentiation of about two to one. As well as by pay increases, mainly for the lower and middle ranks of workers, the standard of living of workers generally is also improved by price reductions, particularly of necessities, and by larger allocations of funds for free social services like kindergartens, creches, schools and public health. There have been 12 major reductions in prices over the whole range of goods, quite apart from random decreases in prices of specific

commodities, and the reduction announced for the year 1969 alone resulted in a profit to the people of 170 million leks. In the ten year period from 1950 to 1960 expenditure on health and sanitation increased five fold.

The right to work is the most important social and economic prerogative of every Albanian worker. Before the war, even with a labour force no larger than the number by which the present labour force increases every two years, unemployment was sometimes as high as 50%. But with labour power no longer a commodity to be hired and fired solely in the interest of profits for an employing class, with no crises of over-production and instead of the economic chaos of capitalist anarchy a steady development of industry according to plans formulated in the interests of the working masses themselves, there can be no unemployment. Indeed there is a continuing labour shortage and those released from a particular branch of industry by rising productivity or the adoption of modern techniques are quickly absorbed by new projects. 'Hushed up agrarian unemployment' has disappeared with the collectivisation of agriculture, and the forced migration of farmers and workers to other countries in search of jobs is a bitter memory of the past. The complete emancipation of women is part of the abolition of unemployment and they now make up 42% of the labour force.

Just as every citizen is entitled to be elected to any post in the state so also every citizen has the right to take a job in any enterprise. At the same time the administrators of enterprises, in consultation with the workers' collectives, can transfer workers from one job to another as the needs of production demand. Ultimately the question of assigning to or dismissing from a job is left to the workers themselves and, without the consent of their collective, management can take no action. There are strictly defined cases when the administration can recommend dismissal and in such cases a suitable job for the worker must be found elsewhere.

No one under the age of 15 can take a job and those under 18 are forbidden to engage in the more arduous kinds of work. Heavier work is also forbidden to women if it could be injurious to their health. The working day is fixed at eight hours, but those on night work do only seven hours with no

drop in pay, and for those engaged in particularly heavy work the hours may be further reduced while they are still paid the same as for a full eight hour day. Similarly teenagers, mothers in the early stages of pregnancy or for a period after returning to work following on child birth and workers pursuing courses of training all work up to two hours a day less at the full rate. Extra work may be done in times of emergency or to meet special production needs, but entirely at the discrimination of workers and excluding those who might harm themselves by their zeal.

Workers are entitled to not less than 36 hours off each week, usually including Sundays, and there are a number of annual holidays like Independence Day, Republic Day, May Day and Liberation Day. The yearly vacation is 12 full working days but 24 days for those in their teens, and supplementary leave of from 6 to 36 days is granted to those performing heavier tasks. From 10 to 30 days are granted to workers taking night or correspondence courses to prepare for their examinations and women workers have 15 weeks off over the period of child birth. Rest homes at the best resorts on the coast or in the mountains are run by the trade unions for workers and their families at only 22% of the cost of maintenance.

The medical service, including sanatoria, health resorts and recuperation centres, is entirely free. Pensions begin at 50 for those in heavy work, at 55 for those in less onerous jobs and at 60 for those doing lighter tasks, women in each category retiring five years earlier. The size of pensions is based on seniority and special or meritorious service but averages 70% of the final year's pay. Incapacitated workers receive from 75% to 95% of their last month's salary. Family pensions cover cases where the wage-earner dies and are based on the needs of the family deprived of support. All these social charges are met out of funds contributed by industrial enterprises and drawn from the state budget. Workers and employees pay nothing at all. Indeed, from 1970, they have been relieved of paying any taxes whatsoever.

Safety at work is governed by the Labour Code and decisions and regulations agreed by the worker collectives and state organs. Factory inspectorates, sanitary and security

commissions and working class control teams help to raise the standards of health and hygiene.

The test of all these measures for the well-being of the working class is the revolutionary impetus of socialist construction. By 1968 the industrial targets set for 1970 had already been reached and this, in the main, has been the story of each of the successive five year plans.

In these achievements on Albania's industrial front, as in the development of agriculture, the decisive role has been played by socialist man – which implies that political considerations have consistently been given priority over economic. Just as in the liberation war it was demonstrated that men are more important than weapons, so in the struggle for socialist construction men are more important than machines. Technique, no matter how advanced, remains a dead letter without the working masses, imbued with a high political sense of duty, to set technique in motion toward social goals collectively fixed. It has been the task of the Albanian Party of Labour to raise the political consciousness of the working class and support its leadership in the social and economic life of the country, exposing reactionary theories which make a fetish of technocracy and exalt experts regardless of their political attitudes. This task finds expression in the Party slogan: 'Man is the most precious capital. Concern for man must be the centre of our attention.'

Socialism is the creation of the labouring masses. Awakening their revolutionary vigour, not in temporary outbursts but in a sustained forward movement, has been the key to Albania's industrial progress. The incentives of their creative activity spring from the nature of their social and economic system, from socialist relations of production which open up an entirely new vista for initiative and endeavour. In socialist society a man's standing depends simply on his participation in and sense of duty toward work which is the source of all material and spiritual values and the guarantee of society's well-being now and in the time to come. Under socialism work itself is emancipated and becomes a matter for honour and praise.

In every factory and industrial enterprise on the same

bulletin board which serves for the posting of criticisms and self-criticisms there is a space reserved for commending those workers who have made special contributions to raising production or proved themselves most helpful to others on the production line. There are heroes and heroines of socialist work, outstanding examples of placing general above personal interest – as there were heroes and heroines during the anti-fascist war.

Adem Reka had been a partisan and after the war he worked so well in the docks at Durrës that he was made a section leader. He was off duty when the tempest of November, 1966, hit the seaport; but hearing that a huge floating crane was in danger of going adrift he rushed to the dockside and was helping to secure the moorings when a snapped cable killed him.

Hysni Hajasllari a master oil driller who has faced danger so often that it is second nature to him, has on several occasions risked his life to seal off wells out of control.

Nuredin Hoxha a chemical worker in Elbasan lost both legs in an accident; but once he was able to walk on the artificial legs provided him, he handed over his pension card and rejoined his fellow-workers at the plant where he has devised a number of useful innovations in methods of work.

Myzejen Golloberda works in the cloth fabricating department of the Hammer and Sickle knit-wear works in Korça. Her qualities of leadership have helped her section surpass the planned output for 1970.

Although they have only recently started working at the Mao Tsetung textile mills, two girls, Naxije Kaldani and Esma Vodica, have already distinguished themselves as conscientious workers.

Lec Kerkaj is a turner in the Enver mechanical plant who started work there when the plant opened and has grown up with it, making many proposals for innovations and rationalisations.

Two women tractor drivers at the Korça tractor station, Fatbardha Cuka and Liliana Kola, are tireless workers and inseparable friends.

Among those singled out for commendation at the Party's Sixth Congress in November, 1971, were Dila Cuni, a

co-operative brigade leader in Lezha district who helped bring in a record maize harvest, the tractor driver, Shyqyri Kanapari, who with the same tractor has ploughed more than 70,000 acres, a leading woman worker in the Korça knitgoods combine, Arterie Shahinllari, and the drivers Nikoll Cuni and Mehmet Delvina.

Albanian youth are following the same traditions of devoted service in the cause of industrial development. Shkurte Pal Vata, a young girl from the northern highlands, was killed while working on the Rogozhima-Fier railway, built entirely, like all the railways in Albania, by young people. Not only has she become an inspiration to her own generation, but her father, when he heard of her death, took his daughter's place at the construction site so that 'the front of socialist construction would not be broken for a moment.'

There is no substitute for direct mass involvement in socialist construction. Just as revolution cannot be exported, imposed from above nor carried out on behalf of the working people, so socialist society, a socialist way of life, cannot be created in spite of nor merely in the name of the working people. Every form of knowing what is best for the people and acting without their full participation will always turn out to be a means of exploiting them and of reintroducing class divisions. Socialism is, quite simply, about people and their collective well-being – people irrespective of race, national boundaries or cultural background, people organised co-operatively and armed with the political consciousness to prevent any insidious restoration of capitalism. Only the working masses have the collective understanding to know what is ultimately best for them. Only the working masses have the collective experience to exploit nature in a way that enriches their own lives and the lives of those to come. Only the working masses have the collective morality to build a new society from which all forms of oppression, discrimination, individually selfish or narrowly class-interested actions have been eliminated.

That is not to question the need for leadership. Socialism does not evolve spontaneously. But such leadership must always be subject to the test of whether it identifies itself completely with the interest of the masses, proceeding always

on the basis of the mass line: 'learning from the masses in order to be able to teach them.' Leaders cut off from the people are like, in Stalin's phrase, 'Antaeus lifted away from the earth.'

There is a need for specialists, for intellectuals, emerging from the ranks of the working class but closely bound to them in socialist spirit. Ramiz Alia, Secretary to the Central Committee, reporting to the Sixth Plenary Session of the Party on 'deepening socialist revolution through developing the class struggle and carrying out the mass line' put the problem in these words: 'Because of their tendency to divorce mental from manual labour, because of their position and the role they play in leading and organising work and of the individual nature of that task, intellectuals are susceptible to alien bourgeois and revisionist attitudes and ideology. They are inclined to detach themselves from the masses, to over-rate their ability and talents, to slip into postures of egotism and self-conceit, to consider that they alone are capable of directing and leading. It is here that a very important arena of the class struggle lies. Therefore our Party organisations should intensify their work with intellectuals and students. Drawing lessons from the plight in which capitalists and revisionists have placed *their* intellectuals, we must see that *our* intellectuals study Marxism-Leninism and the teachings of our Party and of Comrade Enver Hoxha so that they may be tempered as revolutionaries in close contact with workers and peasants and that in addition to books they should take firm hold of pickaxe and rifle.'

Albania has taken great strides along the road of socialist construction, but no one there claims that all social questions have been finally and irreversibly decided in favour of socialism. Personal interest had taken deep root in the people's consciousness during the centuries-old existence of private property and there is a continuing need to struggle against the alien influence of bourgeois individualism, a throw back to the capitalist morality which Adam Smith describes as not appealing 'to the humanity of producers but to their self-love' – a morality reflecting a competitive economic system in which, as Marx points out 'egoism is the necessary form of the individuals' struggle for survival.' If

there is no revolution in a people's thinking, conduct and habits to bring them into conformity with the socialist economic base, then sooner or later that base itself will be eroded and the old exploitative society will be restored. If the ideological superstructure is not also socialised, it will corrupt the leadership, deflect the Party from its vanguard role and so weaken the dictatorship of the proletariat that state power can be wrested from the working masses.

Revisionism is the cancerous growth within Marxism of bourgeois tendencies. Its essence is a purely mechanical interpretation of Marxism which stresses objective factors to the exclusion of subjective. It contends that revolution occurs when the economic conditions are ripe for it, thus eliminating the necessity of preparing the ground ideologically for revolution by a Marxist-Leninist Party equipped with a correct revolutionary theory. And when a revolution has occurred, it argues that the establishment of a socialist economic base automatically creates socialist man with no need for an ideological revolution to complete and consolidate the fundamental change in the relations of production.

Speaking at a meeting in April, 1970, to commemorate the centenary of Lenin's birth, Ramiz Alia dealt with this very problem. 'Of decisive importance to the victory of socialism over capitalism is the establishment of a correct relationship between objective and subjective factors, between basis and superstructure, between economy and politics, between the material conditions of life and the consciousness of man, between proletarian dictatorship and proletarian democracy, between centralism and initiative from below, between the working masses and Party leadership, between national and international interests. In complete opposition to the theories and practice of the revisionists who absolutise the importance of the objective factor, of the material conditions of life, of economic considerations, thus slipping into a position of vulgar materialism and economism, our Party, strictly conforming to Lenin's teachings, has emphasised that, especially in socialism, the role of the subjective factor, the continuous revolutionising of the superstructure, particularly of the Party and state of the dictatorship of the proletariat, placing

politics in command and devoting special attention to the education and tempering of the new man, are of prime importance.'

In this education, as Ramiz Alia had pointed out on a previous occasion, it must be shown that 'to give priority to personal interests means to give priority to the individual not to the collective, to partial not to basic interests, to the interests of the moment not to those of the future, to material not to moral stimuli, to national egotism not to proletarian internationalism . . . Self interests are objective interests, entirely legitimate and rational. Society is not something abstract but composed of people (with all their individual needs), just as general interest is not something abstract but is made up of all the vital interests of workers. Therefore our fight is not against the very existence of self-interest but against placing it above general interest. We are for combining and harmonising them by subjecting personal interests to the interests of the working class, of the people, of revolution and socialism.'

Many Marxists who were perfectly aware of all that was involved in the development of socialist man in terms of continued ideological class struggle throughout the period of socialism underestimated the difficulties of eliminating old ways of thought and action to bring about a moral regeneration and were over optimistic about the time the transition to the classless society of communism would take. Even Lenin, addressing the Youth League in 1920, thought that young people of 15 would live to see communist society, which meant that he envisaged a transition of some 40 or 50 years. The revolutionary experience of the Chinese and Albanian people in building socialism has taught them to think in terms of a much longer period – perhaps 10 generations. And meanwhile the betrayal of the working class in the Soviet Union and the Eastern European people's democracies and the restoration of capitalism in those countries have demonstrated that the vigilance of Party and working people must not slacken at any time during the transitional period.

In Enver Hoxha's Report to the Fifth Party Congress in 1966, which has already been referred to as a political event

of major importance, he developed the idea of the necessity of the ideological revolution. 'The further revolutionising of life in our country cannot be understood without further developing the ideological and cultural revolution. This revolutionising of society is carried out on the basis of the cultural revolution, the primary aim of which is to instill in the conscience of all working people proletarian socialist ideology, to secure the triumph of that ideology and root out bourgeois ideology, to bring about the all-round communist education and revolutionary tempering of the new man – the decisive factor in solving the complex problems in building socialism and defending the country . . . Class struggle against the former exploiting class elements in our own society and against the imperialists and revisionists beyond our boundaries, remains an imperative task of our Party, our state and our working people. But we should consider class struggle in a broader aspect – an ideological struggle to win over the minds and hearts of the people . . . Class struggle in this sense is the struggle against the misuse of socialist property, against parasitic and speculative tendencies to snatch more from society and contribute less, against putting an easy life or individual fame above collective interests, against bureaucratic manifestations and distortions, against religious ideas, prejudices and superstitions, against the underestimation of women and the denial of their equal rights, against bourgeois fashion and a bourgeois way of life generally, against decadent bourgeois and revisionist art and culture, against metaphysics and idealism and against the political influence of our external enemies on our own people . . . This class struggle must be waged within the minds and hearts of the working people against any alien attitudes and behaviour. No one should consider himself immune from evil tendencies and think he has nothing to fight against in his own person. A sharp struggle takes place in the conscience of every man between socialist ideology and bourgeois ideology.'

This report of Enver Hoxha's parallelled both in timing and intent the Proletarian Cultural Revolution in China. But the similarity of the revolutionary movements in the two countries resulted from the fact that both, as socialist countries developing on Marxist-Leninist principles, had

encountered the same problems and set about solving them by applying the same mass line.

Indeed while the Proletarian Cultural Revolution in China and the further revolutionising of life in Albania have been identical in ideological content, there have been differences in the way they were carried out stemming from differences in the specific historical conditions in the two countries. The line of Mao Tsetung ever since the founding of the People's Republic of China has been consistently that of developing the ideological revolution as complementary to the revolution in the economic base of society and even in his early writings this social strategy had already been worked out. But Liu Shao Chi and the revisionists who collected around him had constantly advocated an opposition line, being careful not to challenge too openly the popularity and authority of China's great leader. By taking advantage of any temporary set-backs to China's socialist construction from natural disasters or the beginnings of the split in the world communist movement they were able to usurp some share in state power, being particularly active in cultural and propaganda organisations where their bourgeois qualifications secured them a foothold. Mao Tsetung was perfectly aware of what they were doing and at any time could simply have exposed them and invoked his tremendous prestige to have them removed. But he did not wish to deal with the threat they represented on the basis of an inner political bureau or even an inner party struggle. He preferred to wait till the political consciousness of workers, young people and the army was such that they could be mobilised to repudiate the 'top people in authority taking the capitalist road,' thus revolutionising themselves in the process. This application of the mass line resulted in a sharp revolutionary struggle by the working masses to recapture that portion of state power which the revisionists had assumed.

In Albania the problem of a counter-revolutionary revisionist plot within the Party and state originated much earlier, even before the anti-fascist war had been successfully concluded. Koçi Xoxe and other revisionists, with the support of the Yugoslav Party under Tito, made their bid in the early days of the Albanian People's Republic to divert the

country from a socialist course and make it a part of Yugoslavia. Enver Hoxha had no alternative to exerting his leadership at a time chosen by the revisionists because they considered the people too politically immature to understand the issues and support him. They created a very dangerous situation, but Enver Hoxha exposed the nature of their conspiracy and rallied the forces to deprive them of their positions. This experience of revisionist betrayal at the very beginning of their socialist history armed the Albanian people against allowing revisionists to creep into important posts. That is not to say that there have been no distortions of socialist legality, no incorrect methods of work, no bureaucratic tendencies in Albania to be countered and put right – only that these errors were not represented in an organised form within the Party and state requiring a mass upheaval on the scale of China's cultural revolution.

Just as the Proletarian Cultural Revolution in China was the specific form at a particular period in socialist development of a continuing process of rooting out the old selfish, individualistic ideas and habits of bourgeois society, so the further revolutionising of life in Albania goes on continuously and Enver Hoxha's 1966 Report to the Fifth Party Congress was simply a very cogent expression of the need for perpetual ideological struggle and an urgent call for even more dedicated leadership by communists in creating and fostering the new socialist man. Without the conscious development of socialist morality by the working masses they will not only be unable to achieve such dramatic successes in production but they will not even be able to hold on to the state power which is their guarantee during the transition to communism against the restoration of an exploitative system.

Chapter Fifteen

Albania's Relations with the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China

During the early period of socialist construction Albania enjoyed the closest fraternal relations with the Soviet Union. Stalin had prevented the United States and Britain from excluding Albania from the peace negotiations and the Soviet leadership had supported Albanian resistance to Tito's attempts to take over the country, expelling Yugoslavia from the comity of socialist countries in 1948 as a client state of the United States.

In spite of the desperate need of the Soviet Union to repair its own colossal war damage and rebuild its industrial strength to meet the challenge of the capitalist world headed by a nuclear-armed United States, long term credits were advanced to Albania and specialists helped to set up industrial projects and train Albanians to run them. Factories like the huge Stalin textile plant on the outskirts of Tirana were built with Soviet assistance and Soviet technical aid enabled the Albanians to develop their own mineral resources – like the oil industry which developed around Stalin City, named after the great friend of the Albanian people. Today in most Albanian towns, along with statues of Marx and Lenin, will be seen those of Stalin as well.

Albania was in no sense a 'satellite' of the Soviet Union. The relations between the two states were based on a partnership between countries sharing the same socialist aspirations and determined to defend socialism against encroachments by the capitalist powers. The Albanians were dedicated to developing their country in a spirit of self-reliance and any help received was for the purpose of making them more not less economically independent. They played

their full part in the defence of the socialist camp into which one serious inroad had already been made by the defection of Yugoslavia in exchange for the very different kind of 'aid' supplied by the United States. Albania was the bastion of socialism in the Mediterranean area, preventing the imperialists from further outflanking the socialist countries in southern Europe and providing the Soviet Union with a base which could be used, with the full concurrence of the Albanian people, in protecting the people's democracies and the Soviet Union itself.

Of Stalin the Albanians say: 'He always maintained a most fraternal attitude toward our country, always dealing with our Party on the basis of parity and mutual respect, never intervening in its internal affairs nor trying to impose his own ideas. When our Party solicited his counsel on this matter or that, he insisted that his words were by no means binding, that they should be considered with a critical eye in the light of our conditions and that our Party should decide itself according to its own experience and judgement.'

After Stalin's death in March, 1953, a train of events began in the Soviet Union which was to shatter the unity of the communist world, alter profoundly the relations among major world powers and cast Albania once more in the role of a small embattled country standing up against a vastly superior force in a struggle for its very existence.

One of the first indications that an entirely different line was being adopted by the Soviet leadership came in May, 1955, when Khrushchev unilaterally rejected the decisions of the Information Bureau and other communist and workers' parties in respect to Tito's betrayal of socialism and headed a delegation to Belgrade for the purpose of rehabilitating, without consultation, the Yugoslav leader. Two days before the delegation left Moscow the Albanian Party of Labour was informed of the visit and asked to approve a statement which Khrushchev had drawn up in the name of the Information Bureau without bothering to convene it. This the Albanian Party refused to do on the grounds that there had been no change in the line of the Yugoslav leadership since it had been condemned by the 1948 resolution of communist and workers' parties represented on the Bureau.

As a consequence of Khrushchev's support for the Yugoslav line, in Hungary and other people's democracies concessions were made to capitalist elements inside the country and bourgeois ideology and culture were given free play. In the People's Republic of Albania not only were class enemies granted no concessions but the fight against bourgeois and revisionist tendencies was intensified. The Central Committee had no hesitation in exposing the revisionist activities of Tuk Jakova and Bedri Spahiu in June, 1955, relieving the former of his post on the Central Committee and expelling the latter from the Party altogether.

The conference of the four great powers, the Soviet Union, the United States, Britain and France, at Geneva in July, 1955, was acclaimed by Khrushchev as 'a new stage in the relations between states' and he described the leaders of the imperialist powers as 'reasonable people who were trying to ensure peace' – this on the eve of the Anglo-French-Israeli attack on Suez! It was in pursuance of such collaboration with imperialism that Khrushchev praised the foreign policy of Yugoslavia and argued that it was no different from the foreign policy of the socialist countries. It was not a line of argument that could impress the Albanian people with their direct experience of the role the Yugoslav leadership had played as the price for dollar aid.

At the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in February, 1956, after three years of preparation, Khrushchev presented in the report of the Central Committee a number of 'new' theses described as 'a creative development of Marxist-Leninist theory' which were in fact a complete departure from Marxism-Leninism. Collaboration with imperialism which he labelled 'peaceful co-existence' was exalted as the general line of the foreign policy of all socialist states in opposition to Lenin's principle that the foreign policy of a socialist country could only be based on proletarian internationalism – 'an alliance with the revolutionaries of the advanced countries and with all the oppressed peoples *against* the imperialists.' For the sake of peaceful co-existence at all costs Khrushchev made it clear that he was prepared to give up international class struggle, renouncing on behalf of the colonial peoples any right to

liberate themselves from oppression and reassuring capitalist governments by emphasising 'peaceful transition to socialism' or the Parlimentary road as the only correct line for communist parties everywhere. If only the United States imperialists were given to understand that their economic and military positions all over the world were not to be challenged then they would give up their aggressive designs against the socialist block.

What this really amounted to was an attempt to freeze the world situation just as it was, with all its injustices and inequalities, for the sake of a 'peace' which the two major world powers, the United States and the Soviet Union, would guarantee with their nuclear might. The 'creative development of Marxism-Leninism' which Khrushchev was advancing was simply the division of the world into Soviet and American spheres of influence in which each was to enjoy unquestioned supremacy – a Twentieth Century version of the Pope's demarcation line sharing out the new world between Spain and Portugal. 'Then', Khrushchev was to say, 'if any mad man wanted war, we, the two strongest countries in the world, would have but to shake our fingers to warn him off' – and included among the 'mad men', of course, were any popular leaders wishing to take their countries out of imperialist bondage. Instead of challenging the policy of nuclear blackmail which the United States government had used ever since the war to keep the world safe for the operations of monopoly capitalism, Khrushchev was going to use the Soviet Union's nuclear capacity to get in on the act. That this was the case was demonstrated later on when Albania's opposition to the Khrushchev line prompted the threat from Kozlov, a member of the Central Committee of the Soviet Party, that 'either the Albanians will accept peaceful co-existence or an atom bomb from the imperialists will turn Albania into a heap of ashes and leave no Albanian alive'.

It was at this Congress that Khrushchev made his notorious secret report 'On the cult of the individual and its consequences' which was an all-out attack on Stalin launched, as was Khrushchev's habit, without any prior warning to fraternal parties. Indeed many communist parties only came

to know of the contents of the report through the Western press to which it was leaked.

The attack, a fabrication of distorted documents and all the slanders of Stalin ever propagated by the enemies of socialism, charged him with being an 'ignorant despot' guilty of the greatest 'arbitrary cruelty'. It served the double purpose of consolidating Khrushchev's own position by destroying the personal reputation of his illustrious predecessor and, more important, undermined the theory and practice of Marxism-Leninism by viewing the whole period of socialist construction in the Soviet Union under Stalin's leadership from a capitalist, bourgeois point of view decked out in odds and ends of Marxist-Leninist language. The tremendous achievements of the workers and peasants of the Soviet Union under the guidance of the Communist Party which had transformed a backward, repressive country into a great socialist industrialised state capable of taking on and defeating the armed might of Nazi Germany was described in the report as a 'dark, anti-democratic period of violations of socialist legality, of terror and murders, of prisons and concentration camps'. Stalin's victories against capitalism were presented as 'crimes' against socialism; and the enemies of socialism, witting or unwitting agents of imperialism, whom Stalin had at various times unmasked, like Trotsky, Bukharin, Zinoviev or, after the war, Tito, were described as martyrs and heroes, victims of Stalin's tyranny. In this attack Khrushchev could be sure of the support of all who hated Stalin as a powerful exponent of socialist ideas and a staunch defender of socialism.

The basic political question on which Khrushchev's attempt to reverse the whole line of the Soviet Communist Party depended was whether or not class conflict had ceased to exist in the Soviet Union. Lenin always took an absolutely unequivocal stand on this issue, holding that during the entire historical period separating capitalism from the classless society of communism, that is the period designated as socialism, class conflict did continue and therefore the dictatorship of the proletariat remained a political necessity for the development of a socialist society. Indeed, after the assumption of state power by the working class, bourgeois elements would

struggle even harder to re-establish themselves, not disdaining to call on outside help from the capitalist world for this purpose. This was the position usually defended by Stalin. Mao Tsetung and Enver Hoxha, drawing on the experience of the Chinese and Albanian peoples in making and consolidating a proletarian revolution, have never wavered from this Marxist-Leninist line. But if Khrushchev could convince others, and those with revisionist tendencies were susceptible to such conviction, that at some time earlier than the 20th Party Congress class conflict had ended in the Soviet Union, then the dictatorship of the proletariat would from that period have become unnecessary and Stalin's actions in defence of the dictatorship of the proletariat could be described as arbitrary – an attempt to bolster up a merely personal dictatorship requiring a cult of the individual to delude the masses into acquiescence.

Furthermore, if class conflict had ceased to exist, the Party and state instead of being the political and governmental expressions of the dictatorship of the proletariat could be designated by Khrushchev as the Party and State of the 'whole people'. But in this formulation he departed altogether from anything remotely resembling Marxism. The Marxist view developed by Lenin in such works as 'State and Revolution' and strictly adhered to by all except those deviationists who forfeited any right to call themselves Marxists, was that the state always represented the interests of a particular class in a society in which there was still class conflict. Neither the state nor the communist party was above class struggle and they would cease to exist when classes ceased to exist, in 'the withering away of the state' which Marx had only predicated of the classless society of full communism. Therefore a party or a state of the 'whole people' was nonsense from a Marxist point of view; and Stalin, in his last theoretical work, 'Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR', which attacked revisionist ideas in precisely the same terms the Chinese and Albanians were to use in the polemics following the 20th Congress, specifically criticised the 'state of the whole people' concept as an anti-Marxist attempt to undermine the dictatorship of the proletariat.

In fact, the denial of any further need for the leadership of the working class in a situation where other classes still existed merely prepared the way for those anti-working class elements to recapture political power and begin diverting the Soviet Union from a socialist course. That this was the intention of Khrushchev and the revisionist clique around him became apparent in the economic changes which accompanied these political manoeuvres. The decentralisation of the economy was not a loosening of control from the centre but a change from control by organs responsible to the working people like the state and Party to control by experts, managers and bureaucrats. With this change went a shift in motivation from the socialist incentives of putting collective above personal interests to material incentives no different from those characteristic of capitalist society. The so-called economic liberalisation was simply a move from socialism to state capitalism and, as such, was naturally hailed as a break-through by bourgeois economists everywhere. In due course, along with these political and economic changes went a restoration of bourgeois ideology generally – the 'thaw' welcomed so effusively by bourgeois ideologues in capitalist countries. But it was never intended that such a restoration would threaten the position of the revisionist party hacks and state officials who had brought it about – hence the continuing conflict between bourgeois writers and artists in the Soviet Union demanding the freedom of expression they might have expected in a bourgeois democratic society and the Soviet state apparatus with the same bourgeois values who were prepared to welcome works attacking Stalin and the dictatorship of the proletariat but were not prepared to countenance those criticising themselves and the bureaucratic dictatorship they had imposed.

Neither the Albanian nor the Chinese party was prepared to accept the line Khrushchev elaborated at the 20th Party Congress, although they tried to maintain correct relations with the Soviet Union knowing that Khrushchev did not speak for the Soviet people. It was not that they thought Stalin, for all his great services to the world proletarian movement, was above criticism. No communist leader is ever above criticism and every communist leadership has made

mistakes. Learning from mistakes has been a major feature of the social practice through which the theory of scientific socialism has been creatively developed. But they rejected criticisms made from the point of view of socialism's enemies and realised that Khrushchev's lies and slanders, gaining some credence from the fact that he had played a prominent part in the events he maliciously distorted, was an attempt to bury for all time not only Stalin but Marxism itself.

This rejection by no means implied that Mao Tsetung or Enver Hoxha had any sympathy whatsoever with a 'cult of the individual' which is entirely alien to the spirit of Marxism. Marx himself, when he and Engels had enrolled in a secret communist society, said explictly: 'Both of us don't give even a brass farthing for our popularisation . . . We participated right from the beginning on the proviso that everything that helped mystic subjugation to authority should be wiped out of the constitution.' Lenin always fought any manifestation of such a cult as diametrically opposed to the mass line – 'only those are true bolsheviki leaders who not only teach the workers and peasants but also are taught by them.' And in a letter to Shatunovsky Stalin wrote: 'You speak of your loyalty to me . . . I would advise you to do away with the principle of loyalty towards separate individuals. This is not bolsheviki-like. Be loyal to the working class, to its party, to its state. This is a necessary and good thing. But do not confuse this with loyalty towards specific individuals, which is the empty and unnecessary prattle of a sick intellectual.'

It must have seemed odd to those familiar with developments in the Soviet Union that Khrushchev, who circulated the secret report 'On the cult of the individual and its consequences', at the period when this cult was supposed to have flourished had out-done everyone in adulation of Stalin. He described Stalin as 'the father, the wise teacher, in whose work Marxist-Leninist philosophy has reached its acme . . . the Coryphaeus of science and the genius of mankind' and so on. Indeed Enver Hoxha in speaking on this question in his report to the Albanian Party's Fifth Congress said that 'Stalin *might* be criticised, not because he developed and practised his own cult, but only because he did not take proper

measures to restrain this unnecessary propaganda, especially taking into consideration that the great reputation which he had won by struggle and deeds and the unlimited confidence and love which the Party and people had for him, were sufficient to deal a telling blow to the bureaucratic elements who were jeopardising the dictatorship of the proletariat'. It is obvious that those who attacked Stalin in 1956 for having established a personality cult were the very people who had tried to build it up around him, partly in an attempt to separate him from the masses and partly to lay the grounds for subsequent condemnation.

Following the 20th Party Congress Khrushchev began to bring pressure to bear on the Albanian Party of Labour to re-examine its line in the spirit of the conclusions he had promulgated in Moscow. Michael Suslov, one of the Soviet Party's theoreticians who had thrown in his lot with the revisionist group around Khrushchev, demanded through Liri Belishova of the Albanian Central Committee that the leadership of the Albanian Party should reconsider its attitude toward Tito and the sentences which had been pronounced against Koçi Xoxe, Tuk Jakova and other anti-Party elements on the grounds that these were errors committed 'under the influence of Stalin's cult of the individual'. This demand was repeated in the most arrogant way by the Soviet delegation to the Third Congress of the Albanian Party which met in Tirana on May 25, 1956.

This Congress, representing the 41,372 members and 7,272 candidate members of the Albanian Party, endorsed the political line of the report delivered by Enver Hoxha, considered it 'a mistake to think that class struggle is dying away and that the overthrown classes would give up the struggle of their own free will' and described as correct the measures taken by the Party against 'revisionist, Trotskyite, opportunist elements'. Although the Central Committee had made known to the Soviet leadership its opposition to the anti-Marxist theses of the 20th Party Congress, the Third Albanian Party Congress did not condemn the Khrushchev line openly, wishing to avoid if possible any further damage to the unity of the international communist movement. The Marxist-Leninist line which the Party of Labour of Albania

had pursued since its formation was unanimously confirmed and, unlike a number of other parties, no concessions to revisionism were made under the pressure which the Khrushchev group increasingly exerted. At the same time the Albanian press published a number of articles for popular consideration whose political import was directly opposed to the whole tenor of the 20th Congress formulations.

Khrushchev's rehabilitation of those who had been condemned previously for revisionist activities enabled anti-Marxists to emerge in the people's democracies and even to resume leadership in several of them with Soviet support. This was particularly the case in Poland and Hungary where the dictatorship of the proletariat was seriously weakened and the ideology and culture of the western bourgeoisie were allowed to spread without check. Disguised as 'cultural circles' counter-revolutionary groups were established in many cities. This situation was, of course, exploited by the capitalist countries which recognised the opportunity for eliminating socialism in much of Eastern Europe.

The Albanian Party was aware of what was happening because a plot involving certain members of the Party, backed by Tito and intended to stage a counter-revolution in Albania to coincide with a similar attempt in Hungary, was discovered on the eve of the Third Party Congress. Two of the conspirators, Dali Ndreu and Liri Gega, were warned by Tito to flee to Yugoslavia where an 'Albanian Resistance Group' was being formed with a radio station at its disposal for hostile broadcasts to Albania; but they were both apprehended at the frontier and brought to trial. To the amazement of the Albanians, who were still taking in the full implications of the revisionist usurpation of state power in the Soviet Union, Khrushchev spoke out in defence of these traitors and condemned the Albanian authorities for arresting and punishing them.

Not long afterwards Enver Hoxha, while passing through Moscow, held a conversation with Suslov in which he reported what he had seen in Budapest. He told Suslov that Imre Nagy, one of the rehabilitated revisionist leaders closely associated with Tito, was deserting and was organising a counter-revolution at the 'Petofi Club'. Suslov denied categ-

orically that Nagy could be contemplating any such act of betrayal and took from a drawer Nagy's latest 'self-criticism' to show what a good chap he was! And Khrushchev continued to press for the acceptance of Tito as a socialist leader, when even the Western newspapers were describing Yugoslavia as a 'transmission belt for conveying economic ideas of the west to the east.'

In October, 1956, the counter-revolutionary uprising in Hungary duly occurred and when the Soviet leadership was finally forced to take action to suppress a revolt for which their own revisionist policies were largely responsible, Tito's complicity became obvious. All the flags in Yugoslavia were flown at half-mast when the insurrection was put down and the intervention of the Soviet Army to prevent Hungary from passing over to the imperialist powers altogether was described as 'savage and impermissible'. The Soviet leadership disposed of Imre Nagy whom they had themselves placed at the head of the Hungarian state; and yet in looking for those to blame for the tragic events in Hungary, they lashed out not at revisionists but at 'dogmatists' and renewed their attack on the Marxist-Leninists in Albania and China.

'But why did these things happen after the 20th Congress?' Enver Hoxha demanded. 'Did they really happen because the leadership of the Party of Labour of Albania is sectarian or dogmatic or pessimistic? The tragedy of the Hungarian people will certainly be a great lesson to all honest people in the world. It will be a lesson to all those who, listening to the imperialists and the forces of reaction with demagogical slogans, slacken their vigilance and replace it with opportunism. The Party and people of Albania have never fallen and never will fall into this trap. They will not be misled by slogans of 'people's socialism' and catchwords about some sort of 'democracy' that smell of everything except true proletarian democracy.'

In April, 1957, a delegation of the Party of Labour of Albania, headed by Enver Hoxha and Mehmet Shehu, went to Moscow at the invitation of the Central Committee of the Soviet Party to hold conversations about the differences which had been developing between them since the 20th Party Congress. At one point when Enver Hoxha was

explaining the stand of the Albanian Party, Khrushchev suddenly interrupted him: 'You Albanians are trying to take us back to the road of Stalin!' He demanded that they change their attitude toward the Yugoslav revisionists and rehabilitate those former members of the Albanian Party who had opposed its Marxist-Leninist leadership. This Enver Hoxha and the other delegates refused to do, whereupon Khrushchev shouted: 'You Albanians are hot tempered. It is impossible to come to terms with you. The discussion is closed.'

This incident was the first open clash between the position maintained by the Party of Labour of Albania and the course taken by the Khrushchev revisionists; but even then the talks were not finally suspended and, instead of demands and threats, Khrushchev tried to use economic pressure on the delegation. Believing Albania to be absolutely dependent on Soviet credits he announced the cancellation of the debt Albania had incurred up to 1955, some 450 million old roubles. The delegation, however, did not regard this as charity for which they could be expected to modify their stand but as proletarian internationalism between fraternal peoples for which they expressed their thanks and departed without altering in the slightest their revolutionary line.

This same line was advanced as tenaciously by the Albanian delegation to the meeting of communist and workers' parties held in Moscow in November of that year. Khrushchev used the opportunity to present as out-dated the Marxist-Leninist teachings on imperialist wars, armed uprisings and socialist revolution, on the leading role of the party of the working class in revolution and socialist construction and on the continuing necessity of the dictatorship of the proletariat to prevent a restoration of capitalism. In drafting the documents of the meeting the revisionists under Khrushchev's influence wanted to leave out any reference to imperialism at all – particularly any description of United States imperialism as the enemy of peace; and of course they were vehement in their objections to a declaration that, as the events of the past two years had so clearly shown, revisionism was the main danger in the international communist movement.

The Albanian delegation, led by Enver Hoxha, played an active part in exposing these anti-Marxist formulations, uniting its efforts to this end with the delegation of the Communist Party of China, headed on this occasion by Mao Tsetung himself. It was the beginning of a principled alliance which was to grow ever stronger. Such was their determination to defend a correct revolutionary line that they gained the support of other delegations and the Khrushchev faction was forced to retreat from positions taken up at the start of the conference. Revisionism was described in the final statement as the 'principal danger in the communist world' and its source was defined as 'bourgeois influence internally and capitulation to imperialist pressure externally.'

But as a concession to preserve the unity of the movement the Albanian and Chinese delegations did agree to leave unchanged an incorrect description of the 20th Party Congress as having 'opened a new stage in the international communist movement' which was incompatible with the revolutionary content of the rest of the document. The 1957 Moscow Declaration on the whole represented a victory for the Marxist-Leninist forces but it did not long restrain the revisionists.

Khrushchev certainly did not allow himself and those around him in the Soviet leadership to be bound by the socialist principles set forth in the Moscow Declaration. He sowed confusion generally by issuing quite contradictory statements on all the problems which had been collectively discussed and resolved at the Moscow meeting. The United States was praised as a great country prepared to collaborate with the Soviet Union and also described as an aggressive 'world gendarme'. At one time he would call the U.S. president a 'reasonable, peace-loving friend' and at another a 'hangman' who 'could not even run a kindergarten'. He would laud Tito and the Yugoslav experience to the skies and then call Tito an arrogant person 'who is out of step with the rest of the platoon'. Such eclecticism is characteristic of those who are motivated by an unprincipled opportunism; but the real trend of Khrushchev's policies, behind all the verbal twists and extempore outbursts, was shown in such negotiations as the 1959 Camp David talks with President

Eisenhower. The very basis of the talks as described by Khrushchev was unMarxist and opposed to the principles of popular democracy. 'We have said it more than once that the most complicated international issues can only be settled by the heads of governments vested with the competent authority'.

At Camp David the whole pattern of the new Moscow line became more apparent. According to Khrushchev the existence of nuclear weapons had so changed former conceptions of war that there was no longer any difference between just and unjust wars. 'An atomic bomb does not distinguish between imperialists and working people and millions of workers would be killed for every monopolist destroyed'. The oppressed peoples and nations must abandon any idea of liberating themselves by revolutionary struggle because even a small local war might spark off the conflagration of a world war 'in which we would destroy our Noah's Ark – the globe'. The most important factor for the liberation of colonial peoples, he argued, was disarmament; and if they would contain themselves patiently till the imperialist powers voluntarily surrendered their arms, they could then revolt peacefully!

Naturally these ideas, representing a complete capitulation to United States nuclear blackmail, were very acceptable to Eisenhower as the basis for a shared hegemony of the world with the price for the Soviet Union's partnership being paid by the exploited peoples of the colonial countries. Peaceful co-existence was the name given to this gigantic carve-up by the two major nuclear powers. Indeed, Khrushchev did not blame the danger of a world war on those who used the threat of nuclear weapons to maintain their economic empire, but on 'people who pose as Marxist-Leninists, who are dogmatic, who do not believe in the possibility of achieving socialism and communism under conditions of peaceful co-existence with capitalism'. If the attack on Stalinism was the cover for attacking socialism and restoring capitalism inside the USSR, terror of a nuclear holocaust was the cover for coming to terms with United States imperialism in dividing the world into respective spheres of influence.

In May, 1959, Khrushchev paid a visit to Tirana personally

to discuss differences with the Albanian leadership. The trip was not a success. The Albanians yielded neither to blandishments nor threats. During his brief stay Khrushchev was contemptuous of Albanian efforts to improve and diversify agriculture and to develop its own industry. 'Turn your little country into a flourishing garden,' he suggested. It would make a nice holiday spot for Soviet tourists. 'Specialise in growing oranges' and give up producing your own grain. 'The Soviet Union has such an abundance of grain that the mice eat more than you can produce here.' The Albanians with their experience of the necessity of self-sufficiency in essentials when under attack were not likely to heed such advice – fortunately for them in the light of events the following year after the Bucharest meeting.

Khrushchev left Tirana in a temper and hinted to Sophocles Venizelos who visited Moscow soon after that the Soviet Union would not be at all averse to territorial and political concessions to Greece on the part of the Albanians.

In spite of all this the ideological differences between the Albanian Party of Labour and the Soviet leadership were not made public up till the middle of 1960 and they were not extended to questions of the state relations between the two countries. The same situation obtained in China where also there was increasing concern by the Marxist-Leninist leadership headed by Mao Tsetung at the line being taken by the Khrushchev revisionists. Because both Albania and China were engaged in developing socialist societies on the same fundamental principles and in maintaining the same communist policies in their relations with the world at large, they were inevitably and quite independently arriving at the same conclusions about the split in the socialist camp introduced by revisionism.

This awareness was certainly heightened at the Congress of the Roumanian Worker's Party held in Bucharest in June, 1960. The Communist Party of the Soviet Union took advantage of the occasion to summon a meeting of the fraternal delegates of the various communist parties attending the Congress. While some of the parties were informed privately of what the meeting was to be about, the Party of Labour of Albania, the Communist Party of China, the

Workers' Party of Vietnam and the Party of Labour of Korea understood that the meeting was simply organised for an informal exchange of opinions and for fixing the date of the Moscow conference of all communist parties to be held later that year. To their surprise the Soviet delegation suddenly launched an all-out attack on the Communist Party of China supported by 'informative' material released only a short time before the meeting was convened. They accused the Chinese Party of being 'dogmatic, sectarian, in favour of war and opposed to peaceful co-existence' and demanded that their general condemnation of the Chinese leadership should be endorsed immediately by all the parties represented.

The Albanian delegation quickly made it clear that they totally disapproved of this conduct of the Soviet delegation which violated the principles of relations between fraternal parties. Hysni Kapo expressing the united stand of the Albanians refused categorically to pass judgement on the alleged mistakes of the Communist Party of China without taking full account of the Chinese Party's own views on problems which had been presented in such a hasty, distorted and anti-Marxist way. Were these questions of the condemnation of Stalin, the Hungarian counter-revolution, the means by which workers were to take power 'so trivial that they should not be discussed properly in a meeting organised for the purpose with time for the various parties to consider their positions?'

Infuriated by the Albanian opposition to a quick decision against China which the Soviet delegation had tried to obtain, Antropov said bluntly to Hysni Kapo: 'Albania must decide whether to go with the 200 millions (the Soviet Union) or with the 650 millions (People's China)' – meaning that it was too small and exposed to stand on its own. But the Albanian delegation refused to budge from their position and, in fact, the meeting ended without the Soviet delegation's achieving its purpose.

Members of the Albanian delegation on their way home after the meeting were worked on by the Khrushchev group in an effort to turn them against the leadership of the Albanian Party who were charged with 'betraying Albanian-Soviet friendship'.

Liri Belishova, a member of the Political Bureau, on her way back from China via Moscow, was influenced by such an approach and took up a position of opposition to the Marxist-Leninist line of the Party. She was joined in her factional activities by Koco Tashko, President of the Auditing Commission. He had been recruited by the Soviet Embassy in Tirana which enjoyed complete freedom of action in Albania and used it to make contact with officers in the services, Party cadres and state officials. Both of them were expelled from the Party and all other attempts by the Soviet revisionists to breach the unity of the Party failed - even when backed by the offer of large bribes. They were no more successful with Albanians who had studied in the Soviet Union and were therefore thought to be more susceptible to corruption. 'Our cadres,' Enver Hoxha said of these efforts, 'tempered in the national liberation war and in the bitter life and death struggle with the Yugoslav revisionists defended their heroic Party in a Marxist way.'

As well as these attempts to undermine the Albanian position from within, there were open attacks from Moscow not stopping short of scarcely veiled military threats. Just before the Moscow conference Marshal Malinovsky launched a vicious diatribe against the Albanian people and leaders; and Marshal Grechko, Commander-in-chief of the Warsaw Treaty forces, told the Albanian military delegation that contracts for military equipment already signed would not be met, adding 'You are only in the Warsaw Pact for the time being anyway.' Then in October when a serious earthquake and floods following one of the worst droughts in Albanian history so depleted the grain reserves that the people were faced with an acute bread shortage, the Soviet Union refused to sell Albania grain – even though they were exporting large quantities at that time to other countries. The mice in Russia might eat but the Albanians could starve as far as the Soviet revisionists were concerned. China was able to divert supplies of grain to Albania which carried them through the bad period.

By this time it was obvious what persistence in defending Marxism-Leninism against the Khrushchev revisionists might cost. Once more Albania found itself confronting a mighty

economic and military power whose present leadership was determined to put an end to Albanian resistance in any way possible. And once more the Albanian people showed themselves united and prepared to endure whatever sacrifices were required rather than yield to economic or military pressure by abandoning the correct line of the Party of Labour. It was with the confidence of a united country behind him that Enver Hoxha led the Albanian delegation to the Moscow Conference of 81 communist and workers' parties convened in November, 1960. To the assembled delegates of the world communist movement he made one of the most courageous speeches of all time, at last exposing the whole anti-Marxist course of Khrushchev and the other revisionists who had usurped state power in the Soviet Union and detailing every move against the principled stand of the Albanian Party and people. Mehmet Shehu has justly described this great speech as 'an everlasting monument in the history of the international communist movement, an exceptional contribution of our Party and Comrade Enver Hoxha . . . to the defence of the purity of Marxism-Leninism on a world scale.'

'You,' Enver Hoxha addressed Khrushchev directly, 'raised your hand against a small country and its Party; but we are convinced that the Soviet people who shed their blood in defence of our people and that the great Party of Lenin are not in agreement with these actions of yours.' He denied the charge of ingratitude to the people of the Soviet Union who were as much the victims of revisionism as those outside their country whom Khrushchev had tried to bully and intimidate.

He called on all those present to 'confront imperialism with the colossal economic, military, moral, political and ideological strength of the socialist camp, as well as with the combined strength of the peoples throughout the world.' He assured them that the Albanian people 'who detest war are fully aware of the warlike moves of the imperialist powers; but they have not become pessimistic nor have they been marking time as far as socialist construction is concerned. They have a clear vision of their future and have set to work with full confidence, being always on guard, keeping the pickaxe in one hand and the rifle in the other. We hold the

view that United States-led imperialism should be mercilessly exposed, politically and ideologically . . . No concessions of principle should be made to imperialism.'

Khrushchev's false ideas about a change in the character of imperialism were firmly repudiated. 'Imperialism, particularly United States imperialism, has changed neither its skin nor its nature. It is aggressive, it will be aggressive while even a single tooth remains in its mouth . . . Therefore we continue to insist that it must be made clear to the peoples that there can be no absolute guarantee that there will be no world war until socialism has triumphed over the greater part of the world.'

If the spread of socialism was the real road to world peace, then 'peaceful co-existence does not imply, as the revisionists claim, that we should give up class struggle . . . We should further promote class struggle in capitalist countries, as well as the national liberation movement of the peoples of colonial and dependent countries. The labouring masses of the world, led by the working class and guided by the communist party, should make life impossible for imperialism, crush its fighting and economic potential and proceed to the destruction of the old power and the establishment of the new power of the people.

'Will they do this by violence or by the peaceful parliamentary road?' Enver Hoxha posed a question around which the revisionists had raised considerable confusion. 'So far,' he pointed out, 'no people, no proletariat, no communist or workers' party has ever assumed power without bloodshed, without violence . . . Our Party thinks that on this problem we should be prepared to follow both roads, but especially that of seizing power by violence, because if we are well prepared for that, the peaceful road has a better chance of success.'

He also raised the question of Khrushchev's bargain with Eisenhower at the Camp David talks to deprive China of atom bombs. 'Why should not China have the atom bomb? We think China *should* have it . . . and then we shall see whether the U.S. imperialists will dare to brandish their weapons as they do at present . . . We (Marxist-Leninists) will never attack first with the bomb; we are opposed to war; we

are ready to destroy all such bombs; but we must have it meanwhile for defensive purposes.'

'The imperialists and their agents accuse China and Albania of being warlike and opposed to peaceful co-existence. Why? Because we do not open our borders for them to come on to our land and graze freely. The time has gone forever when the territory of Albania could be treated as a medium of exchange between the great powers. We *are* opposed to a co-existence with Yugoslavia which means that we should give up our ideological and political struggle with the agents of international imperialism. We *are* opposed to co-existence with the British or U.S. imperialists for the sake of which we would be expected to recognise the old political, diplomatic and trading concessions King Zog's regime granted them.

'On the other hand the Party of Labour of Albania would accept state relations of good neighbourliness with Yugoslavia provided the principles of peaceful co-existence between states with different social systems are observed because, as far as the Party of Labour of Albania is concerned, Tito's Yugoslavia has not been, is not and never will be a socialist country so long as it is headed by a group of renegades and imperialist agents . . . We will never agree to carving up Albania to satisfy Greek chauvinists and we condemn Khrushchev for arousing Venizelos' hopes of territorial aggrandisement.'

Taking up the plot against the Communist Party of China at the Bucharest meeting, Enver Hoxha criticised the Soviet leadership in forthright terms. 'The Party of Labour of Albania is unanimously of the opinion that the Soviet comrades made a grave blunder in unjustly attacking the Communist Party of China . . . The Bucharest meeting should, under no circumstances, be forgotten but must be severely condemned as a stain on the international communist movement.' He went on to characterise the three years since the Moscow Conference as a period fully verifying that 'the revisionists are nothing but splitters of the communist movement and the socialist camp, avowed enemies of socialism and the working class.'

Enver Hoxha realised that: 'There may be people who will not be pleased with what our small Party is saying. Our small

Party may be isolated. Our country may be subjected to economic pressure to try to prove to our people that their leadership is no good. Our Party may be and is being attacked. Suslov equates the Party of Labour of Albania with bourgeois parties and likens its leaders to Kerensky. But this does not intimidate us . . . Marxism-Leninism has given us the right to have our say and no one can take it away from us, neither through political nor economic pressure, neither through epithets nor threats.'

He ended his great speech with an expression of the Party of Labour's determination to do everything possible to strengthen the unity of the communist and workers' movement. For nearly ten years the speech remained unpublished and unknown outside the circle of fraternal parties at the 1960 Conference – unlike Khrushchev's 'secret' report to the 20th Party Congress which was carefully leaked to the enemies of socialism. Not till the end of 1969, long after any hope of maintaining the unity of the movement had been shattered by the Soviet revisionists, was Enver Hoxha's speech made public.

In the discussions which took place during the course of the Conference, Khrushchev remarked that he 'could reach a better understanding with Harold Macmillan than with the Albanians.' To which the Albanians retorted: 'That you can come to terms with Macmillan, Eisenhower, Kennedy and their stooge, Tito, by making all sorts of compromises and concessions is a personal talent of yours which no one envies.' Enver Hoxha was to describe 'the chatterbox charlatan, N. Khrushchev, as the greatest counter-revolutionary that history has ever known.' And Mehmet Shehu to Khrushchev's question as to whether they had any criticisms at all to make of Stalin announced: 'Yes, Not getting rid of you!'

The Albanian delegation, as at the earlier Moscow Conference three years before, played a leading part with the Chinese delegation in improving the draft declaration and strengthening its Marxist-Leninist content. There were still serious flaws like the wrong evaluation of the 20th Party Congress; but on the whole the Declaration eventually signed by the 81 parties was a repudiation of revisionist theses. The

epoch in which we live, for example, was not characterised as one of peaceful co-existence and economic competition, but as the epoch of the 'transition from capitalism to socialism . . . of the struggle between the two social systems, the epoch of socialist revolutions and of national liberation revolutions, the epoch of the collapse of imperialism and the liquidation of the colonial system . . .' The Declaration also condemned the Yugoslav form of 'international opportunism which is a concentrated expression of the theories of modern revisionism.'

The Moscow Conference of 1960 was almost an exact repetition of the 1957 Conference. In both cases Khrushchev and the revisionist Soviet delegation prepared for the meeting by distributing material containing unsubstantiated attacks on the Albanian and Chinese parties; in both cases the revisionists were unable to defend their capitulationist line in open debate; in both cases declarations were drafted and signed which committed all the parties present to the general line of Marxism-Leninism and in both cases the Soviet revisionists and the revisionists in other countries and parties demonstrated their opportunistic character by completely disregarding the principles set forth in a document they had found it expedient to sign.

After the Conference the Soviet leadership showed its anger at the role the Albanians had played by stepping up their hostile actions in every field. The military-naval base at Vlora which Albania had agreed to establish as part of its commitment to the defence of the Warsaw Pact countries had already begun to be treated by the Russians as if it were their own territory or at best an enclave in a vassal state. Then in May, 1961, eight submarines which belonged to Albania were taken by force and Albanian warships anchored at Sevastopol were taken over at the same time. Russian service men at the Vlora base had been instructed to conduct themselves in such a way as to provoke an incident which could serve as a pretext for Soviet military intervention in Albania. But the vigilance of the Albanian government, firmly restraining the Soviet personnel while not providing any unnecessary excuse for Soviet interference, frustrated the plan.

Meanwhile all the members of the Albanian army and

military specialists from Albania studying at military schools and academies in the Soviet Union were expelled and the Albanian representative at the United Command Headquarters of the Warsaw Pact in Moscow was given 24 hours to get out of the country.

In July, 1960, the Soviet leadership had extended its ideological differences with China to state relations and had recalled all the Soviet technicians from China and had unilaterally broken hundreds of contracts and agreements. After the Moscow Conference the same kind of pressure was brought to bear on Albania. All the agreements concluded between the Soviet Union and Albania were cancelled; all Soviet specialists were withdrawn; all economic, trade, technical, scientific and cultural relations were suspended and an economic, political and military blockade was imposed. Naturally for a small country like Albania, already shut off from the rest of Europe by two unfriendly powers, these hostile actions by the Soviet leadership were very serious. Not since the anti-fascist war had the Albanian people been forced to endure such hardships nor to face such a grave threat to their very existence. Then they were fighting to bring into being their people's democratic state. Now they were fighting for the survival of their socialist society. But through all the shortages and anxieties of this period they never wavered in their support of the line defended by their leaders and their Party.

At the 22nd Congress of the Soviet Party in October, 1961, the Soviet leaders viciously attacked the Albanian Party and the People's Republic of Albania, calling openly from the rostrum for a counter-revolution by the Albanian people to overthrow the Marxist-Leninist leadership and replace it with a revisionist leadership which would be loyal to Khrushchev.

Chou En-lai, leader of the Chinese delegation, rose to the defence of the Albanians as Hysni Kapo had defended the Chinese at the Bucharest meeting. He pointed out that unilateral criticism and the laying open of disputes between fraternal parties before the enemies of socialism could not be regarded as a serious Marxist-Leninist attitude.

However the Soviet leadership was not deterred from its

attacks and immediately after the Congress recalled the Soviet ambassador from Tirana and demanded the departure from the USSR of the Albanian ambassador. By cutting off diplomatic relations the Soviet leadership not only intended to isolate Albania from the rest of the socialist camp but to indicate that Albania was fair game for the imperialist powers or their client states.

It was in this situation that Enver Hoxha declared: 'Albania's borders are insurmountable, defended by a brave people and an eagle-like Party which will smash you if you dare attack us. Furthermore Albania is not alone, not isolated. If you touch our borders you must know that to assist socialist Albania to defend itself there are those who will not recognise state boundaries.' And to the revisionists he said: 'If you raise your knife against us, under the cloak of your demagogy, you may rest assured that we shall point our rifle at you; and the cracking of our rifle will be heard throughout the Soviet Union raising around your heads a tempest as the brave and fraternal Soviet people strike you with the terrible fist of Leninism.'

One of the outstanding sights to greet the eye of the visitor to Tirana is the magnificent Palace of Culture, a huge structure of native marble and glass which is the centre of cultural and social life in the capital. In January, 1959, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union decided to build in Tirana a palace of culture as a present to the Albanian people.

The design was agreed in April, 1960, and in May work began, proceeding rapidly through the close co-operation of Soviet architects and the State Building Enterprise of Tirana. But by January, 1961, the supply of building materials from the Soviet Union had stopped and the work slowed down. The Albanians had already spent a sum of 48 million leks for what remained, month after month, a vast unfinished building in the middle of town. In April a shipment of materials actually arrived in the port of Durrës but was withdrawn at once on the pretext that the materials 'had been loaded by mistake and were not really intended for Albania.' And at the end of the month all the Soviet specialists working on the building were suddenly withdrawn.

On May 5 the Government of Albania decided to carry out the construction work on its own. The plan was altered to make the Palace of Culture much larger than originally intended so that it could accommodate even more social and cultural activities – a theatre for operatic performances, another concert hall and a spacious library as well as restaurants, cafés and conference rooms. This splendid building stands today as a popular monument to the self-reliance of the Albanian people. In many parts of the country the same thing happened in respect to industrial plants like the huge cement factory at Vlora. Begun as joint projects between Albania and the Soviet Union, they were completed, after the Soviet Union had torn up all its agreements, by the Albanian people – often without blue prints or plans of any kind to guide their work.

Among the agreements broken unilaterally by the Soviet Government was one concerning the training of a thousand young Albanians in the Soviet Union on a shared cost basis. A Russian note in the late summer of 1961 pointed out that the present agreement had no real validity because it had been arrived at verbally and there was nothing in writing. This was followed by a charge of the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs that the Albanian students were 'spreading slanders about Soviet-Albanian relations and seeking to draw Soviet students into provocative discussions.' Having got all the Albanian students deported from the country for criticising revisionism the Soviet authorities then circulated the story that the young Albanians had been arrested and locked up on their arrival home for being friendly to the USSR! The Albanian Government was able to reassure the Khrushchev contingent on the score of their concern about the young people whose training in the Soviet Union had been so abruptly terminated. They were alive and well and continuing their studies at the socialist University of Tirana.

The general line of the world communist movement which had been hammered out and signed by the 81 communist parties at the 1960 Moscow Conference did not at all prevent the Khrushchev revisionists from dragging the Soviet Union and the countries increasingly dependent on it along the road of capitulation to imperialism internationally and the restor-

ation of capitalism at home. A whole series of events along this retrograde path were analysed by the Albanian Party to demonstrate in the clearest way the profound differences between the opportunist line of the revisionist leadership of the Soviet Union and the Marxist-Leninist line of the parties and peoples of Albania and China.

Two such events were the Cuban missile crisis and the Sino-Indian border dispute. 'In the Cuban issue,' the Albanians pointed out, 'Khrushchev acted both as an adventurist and a capitulationist.' Having placed rocket sites on Cuban soil without considering the consequences, 'he not only made unilateral concessions to the United States Government by hastily withdrawing them, but even exerted pressure on the sovereign state of Cuba to accept the international control of U.S. imperialism operating through the United Nations in order to make good his promises to President Kennedy.' This was like the Soviet Government's support of United Nations intervention in the Congo when the U.N. forces carried out the wishes of the United States by destroying the liberation government and conniving at the murder of the popular Congolese leader, Patrice Lumumba.

'In the Sino-Indian border conflict,' the Albanians charged, 'Khrushchev claimed to be neutral but actually supplied military aid to the Indian reactionaries whose aggressive 'forward policy' in disputed territory led to a frontier war against a socialist country.' The magnanimity of the Chinese in withdrawing from the territory in question having defeated the Indian forces and in releasing the prisoners taken and returning the arms captured, even repairing those which had been damaged in the fighting, is probably unequalled in history.

Of the tri-partite Moscow Treaty of 1963 and the Non-proliferation Treaty which the Soviet leadership signed with the imperialist powers to try to prevent China from acquiring a nuclear capacity, Mehmet Shehu said in a speech to the People's Assembly: 'We wish the nuclear potential of the People's Republic of China to become even stronger because nuclear weapons in the hands of the 700 million revolutionary people of China, brought up on the teachings of our great Marxist-Leninist comrade, Mao Tsetung, are in

the service of real peace in Asia, in defence of the sovereignty of China and of the freedom of the world's peoples and of revolution.' Only China of the states possessing nuclear weapons has ever given a solemn undertaking never to use them first.

'While making a big fuss about the 'aid' which they give the Vietnamese people,' Mehmet Shehu continued, 'the Soviet revisionists leave no stone unturned to help the United States subdue the historic struggle of the people of Vietnam. And while posing as friends of the Arab people, they betray the Palestinian struggle in collaboration with United States imperialism.'

The final proof of the correctness of Albania's characterisation of Soviet revisionism came with the invasion and military occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1968 – 'Khrushchevism without Khrushchev', since Brezhnev who succeeded the deposed revisionist leader followed the same line. The calm acceptance of this act of aggression by the United States as compared with the hysteria whipped up over Hungary demonstrated just how far the collaboration between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. in splitting the world into respective spheres of influence had gone in the twelve years between these two events. For some time Albania had neither been allowed to nor had wished to play any part in the Warsaw Pact in whose name the invasion was carried out. On September 12, 1968, Albania announced its withdrawal from the Pact altogether. The Warsaw Treaty had been drawn up as a defensive association of socialist countries, but it had been turned by the revisionist leadership of the Soviet Union into 'a tool to enslave the very countries participating in it.'

In the speech explaining Albania's stand on the Warsaw Treaty, Mehmet Shehu described 'the global strategy of the United States-Soviet alliance as peace in Europe – war in Asia. And why are all their spears pointed toward Asia? Because there stands great People's China which has become an insurmountable obstacle to their imperialist and revisionist plans for the domination of the world.'

Both Albania and China, neither of which has a single soldier beyond its own frontiers, have been consistently described by the imperialists, who have military bases all over

the world and are engaged in wars of suppression in many parts of Asia, Africa and Latin America and by the Soviet Union whose army occupies a 'fraternal country' and whose 'aid' is used as a lever to dominate countries in the Middle East and elsewhere, as warlike! That is because both Albania and China have remained bastions of socialism, continuing to support liberation struggles against imperialism and to believe in the resistance to capitalism of the working class in the imperialist countries themselves among whose number the Soviet Union must now be counted. By their very existence as countries committed to the construction of socialist societies by establishing socialist economic foundations and, most important of all, by creating socialist man and encouraging a quality of life at every level which is genuinely socialist in content, Albania and China do pose a serious threat to all regimes based on exploitation and oppression; but it is not the kind of threat represented by invading armies or nuclear blackmail.

And within the Soviet Union and the East European people's democracies, like Poland or Hungary, the so-called liberation of economics which Yugoslavia had 'pioneered' rapidly resulted in a complete dismantling of socialism and a restoration of capitalism based on material incentives and the formation of a new exploiting class. Differentials between the wages of workers in factories or on the land and directors, managers and professional experts became even greater than in some capitalist countries where no proletarian revolution had ever taken place. As Chinese critics have pointed out: 'From production to distribution, from economic branches to government organisations, the forces of capitalism run wild in town and countryside. Speculation, cornering the market, price rigging and cheating are the order of the day: capitalist roaders in enterprises and government team up in grafting, embezzling, working for their own benefit at the expense of the public interest, dividing up the spoils and taking bribes. Socialist ownership of the whole people has degenerated into ownership by a privileged stratum, and is manipulated by a handful of new bourgeois elements . . . This has been a painful historical lesson!'

And with this restoration of capitalism in the economic

field has gone a general bourgeois demoralisation over the whole range of social life in the Soviet Union. The Albanian Party paper, Zeri i Popullit, in an editorial on April 3, 1968, described 'the process of bourgeois degeneration developing in the sphere of culture, the arts, ethics and in the whole manner of living. It becomes daily more difficult to differentiate between the cultural life and way of living in the Soviet Union and other revisionist countries and in the capitalist countries of the West. The pursuit of an easy and lazy life, the spread of decadent films, music and literature, the imitation of the licentious culture of the West have become an every day phenomenon in the life of these countries.'

This moral degeneration and general reversion to a more primitive social and economic system was naturally used by the bourgeois apologists of capitalism to show that 'you can't change human nature' and that socialism therefore is always bound to fail. The Albanians in their struggle against revisionism not only had the task of defending themselves but also of defending the very ideals of socialism and giving the lie to interested cynics who based their sneers on the betrayal of socialism in the country of the great October Revolution.

As well as successfully preserving and developing a Marxist-Leninist line in their own country the great good that came to the Albanian people out of their confrontation with the Soviet revisionist leadership in the troubled years of the great schism between the two lines in the world communist movement was the close friendship of the Chinese people and their leaders. In his report to the Fifth Party Congress, Enver Hoxha said: 'You may rest assured, comrades, that come what may in the world at large, our two parties and our two peoples will certainly remain together. They will fight together and they will win together.' And Mao Tsetung expressed the same idea: 'An attack on Albania will have to reckon with great People's China. If the U.S. imperialists, the modern Soviet revisionists or any of their lackeys dare to touch Albania in the slightest, nothing lies ahead for them but a complete, shameful and memorable defeat.'

Hundreds of years before, the Albanians under the leadership of Scanderbeg had finally been conquered by the invading armies of the Turks because no allies were prepared

to join them in the struggle. Now many centuries later the Albanian people by their steadfast defence of socialism and their courage in the face of powerful enemies have won the greatest and most reliable ally they could wish for – People's China. 'The Albanian people consider it an honour,' Enver Hoxha has said, 'and are proud that they have friends and comrades-in-arms so loyal and resolute, in good as in bad days, as the fraternal Chinese people.'

It may seem at first a strange alliance – this tiny European country and this great Asian power; but they have certain things in common in their past histories as well as in their present political and economic systems. Both are made up of people who have for long occupied the same territory and developed a national identity which endured subjugation by foreign invaders. Both were semi-feudal, semi-colonial countries at the time of waging liberation wars of epic proportions which were also revolutionary wars. Both went forward to the building of socialist societies without passing through an intervening period of capitalist development. Both enjoyed the leadership of great Marxist-Leninists who were able to take over and develop creatively in application to their own concrete conditions the revolutionary theory originated by Marx, amplified by Lenin and defended by Stalin. Both, learning from the experiences of the betrayal of socialism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, have waged unremitting struggles against revisionism within and without.

The Proletarian Cultural Revolution in China destroyed any hopes of the U.S. imperialists and Soviet revisionists that they would 'capture the fortress from within'. As Mehmet Shehu has said: 'The Proletarian Cultural Revolution led by the great Marxist-Leninist Mao Tsetung swept away all the muck in Chinese society, purged the Chinese people's revolutionary ranks of the revisionists headed by China's Khrushchev, Liu Shao-chi, multiplied the forces and intensified the revolutionary vitality of the Chinese people and frustrated the counter-revolutionary hopes of the imperialists and revisionists.' In Albania, too, it was necessary to deal with their own early Khrushchev, Koçi Xoxe, and the fight against revisionist tendencies has gone on ever since. But in

this continuing cultural revolution there have been particularly sharp phases such as that following on Enver Hoxha's report submitted to the Fifth Party Congress in 1966. 'Our struggle for mastering Marxist-Leninist ideas,' he said then, 'for deepening the ideological and cultural revolution, cannot be successfully carried out if all the Party members and working masses are not involved in it, and if the mass line, the line of thorough socialist democratisation, is not courageously implemented in a revolutionary way. To put such a line into practice a sharp struggle must be waged against the bourgeois and reactionary intellectualist conception that theory, philosophy, sciences and art are too difficult to be grasped by the masses, that they can only be grasped by cadres and intellectuals. This would mean that Marxism-Leninism could not be grasped by the masses.'

It must have been thought that the economic blockade in which the Soviet leaders virtually joined hands with the imperialist powers to strangle Albania economically would soon bring about its financial ruin. But to the redoubled efforts of the Albanian people was added assistance from the People's Republic of China to prevent the Third Five Year Plan from being sabotaged. It had been prophesied by the revisionists that having cut themselves off from Soviet aid the Albanians would approach the United States cap in hand. No conceivable hardships could have prevailed on the Albanian people to do any such thing. In fact with the fraternal assistance of the Chinese, at the very time when the Albanians were supposed to have been brought to their knees, they embarked on 25 important new industrial projects.

At the end of 1963 a delegation headed by Chou En-lai arrived in Albania to strengthen the close bonds between the two peoples. A joint statement issued at the end of the visit, signed by Chou En-lai and Mehmet Shehu, emphasised their agreement over the whole field of international affairs and on the correct line for building socialism in their two countries.

An editorial in Zeri i Popullit of January 11, 1964, commenting on the visit of the Chinese delegation concluded with the following words: 'The Albanian people are happy that comrade Chou En-lai has such a high regard for our

Party and Government in respect to questions of internal socialist construction and external relations with other countries. This will inspire the Albanian people to carry on with greater determination their struggle along the correct path charted by our Party headed by Comrade Enver Hoxha. The People's Republic of China has given and is still giving our Republic valuable many-sided aid in the spirit of proletarian internationalism. This is an important factor in the socialist construction of Albania. We therefore express our thanks to the People's Republic of China.'

The gratitude of the Albanian people can be seen in spontaneous expression all over the country. 'Long live the friendship of the Albanian and Chinese peoples' painted on factory walls and inscribed on banners streaming in the breeze. They can accept assistance from the Chinese in the spirit in which it is given because they know that they are playing their full part in support of the world struggle against imperialism and that their efforts in making Albania a bastion of socialism in Europe are of tremendous value to their Chinese comrades as, indeed, to workers everywhere who are conscious of the historic mission of their class.

In his 1966 Report Enver Hoxa, as on many other occasions, returned to this theme of the revolutionary friendship between Albania and China. 'Convinced that I am expressing the purest feelings of our militant people and our Party comrades, allow me from the high tribune of this Congress to convey to the fraternal Chinese people and to Chairman Mao Tsetung our profound gratitude for the invaluable aid they have given us.' (Prolonged applause).

The Chinese on their side could not be more respectful of Albania's sovereignty and independence. They repudiate any hint of the great nation chauvinism for which they have condemned Khrushchev and are well aware that Albania's importance to them and to socialism lies precisely in its self-reliant development as a socialist country in its own right. The aid they give is designed to enhance Albania's independent socialist construction and by no means to tie the Albanian economy to China's. This aid is at once important and limited, representing about 10% of Albania's external trade. Its quality, as can be seen in the machine tools at the

Tirana spare parts factory or the fully-automated textile plant near Berat, is of the highest, comparable if not superior to anything to be seen in the capitalist countries of the West.

In connection with the setting up of new industrial projects Chinese specialists come to Albania and stay only so long as is necessary to pass on their skills to Albanians, often having learned Albanian for the purpose. They live modestly on the same standard of remuneration as Albanian workers, and are very popular with the people. They give all the technical assistance they can but are careful not to try to impose their own way of doing things on their hosts. The Albanians cannot but compare this friendly and helpful attitude to the conduct of the Soviet specialists after Stalin's death whose arrogance and selfishness made them quite insufferable to a proud people. An engineer newly arrived from Moscow not only expected sumptuous accommodation, but might demand payment at four times the salary of the President of the Albanian People's Republic!

In 1968 Enver Hoxha addressing the Tirana regional Party conference spoke of the delegation which had just visited China and signed an agreement by which Albania was given interest-free credits for the construction of 30 important new projects. These included the metallurgic works at Elbasan which can process 800,000 tons of iron-nickel ore a year and produce 250,000 tons of high grade rolled steel and the Fierza hydro-electric plant producing one billion seven hundred million kilowatt hours a year. This, he pointed out, was proletarian internationalism in its highest form — friendship and mutual agreement on all questions providing the basis of economic aid, not economic aid to buy agreement.

Albania's foreign policy, like that of China, has remained firmly socialist in a world where so much else has been constantly shifting and changing. The two fundamental principles of socialist foreign policy are proletarian internationalism and peaceful co-existence, reflecting the class division of the world into the working masses, most of whom have yet to emancipate themselves, and the governments that continue to exploit them.

Proletarian internationalism is expressed by the Albanian

state and people in their fraternal support for all those seeking to end their exploitation, whether by a capitalist class within their own countries or by capitalist governments following colonial policies.

As the Foreign Minister of Albania, Nesti Nase, said in a speech delivered in New York on October 2nd, 1972, during the 27th session of the General Assembly of the United Nations: 'As the representative of a country the noble principle of whose policy is the support of peoples fighting for freedom and independence, I cannot remain silent in the face of the fact that these countries (of Asia, Africa and Latin America) are the object of the greed of neo-colonialists who threaten their political independence and sovereignty, nor can I fail at the same time to express the full solidarity of our people with their just, anti-imperialist and anti-colonialist struggle.'

At the same time the Albanians, as Marxist-Leninists, know that revolutions cannot be exported. They have to be made by the working masses themselves under their own Marxist-Leninist leadership. There can never be any question therefore of Albanian interference in the affairs of any other sovereign state, however much sympathy may be felt for the victims of oppression there. What they can offer is their own experience of how a correct line enabled them to overcome tremendous odds.

It is this important consideration which makes it possible to reconcile completely proletarian internationalism with peaceful co-existence which is the maintenance of correct relations between states with different social systems, based on respect for each other's territorial integrity, non-interference in each other's internal affairs and trading agreements to each other's advantage as between equals.

On this basis Albania established diplomatic relations with Greece in May, 1971, Greece having abandoned the territorial claims which had poisoned relations in the past. Relations with Yugoslavia have also been much improved without Albania's playing down in any way the great ideological differences between the two countries.

Similarly, by consistently following a socialist line in foreign affairs while continuing to build socialism at home,

the Chinese people have shattered the attempts of the United States and Soviet Governments to keep them isolated from the rest of the world. After a series of diplomatic victories by the People's Republic of China, President Nixon's visit to Peking was the final admission of the complete failure of the policy of trying to shut China behind a great wall of non-recognition.

It has already been suggested in the United States that Albania must soon be recognised, if only as a counter to Soviet influence in the area increasingly exerted through Yugoslavia. While the two super-powers, the United States and the Soviet Union, collude with each other in trying to share world hegemony, 'it would be unrealistic,' as Enver Hoxha has pointed out, 'to see in the Soviet-American alliance only the rapprochement and co-operation of the two super-powers, their common actions and interests. In view of their imperialist character, the United States and the revisionist Soviet Union are also torn asunder by conflicts, rivalries and deep contradictions which prevent them from acting always in harmony and in complete unity. The existence and worsening of these contradictions are inherent in the very foundation of that alliance, the social-capitalist system of the two countries, their imperialist designs. Preparing for war, the two parties also plan to devour one another.'

It does not matter what motives may lead the United States to the recognition of Albania, Albania's relations with the United States will be based on precisely the same principles of peaceful co-existence, of complete equality, as obtain in all Albania's other state relationships. If the United States did resume correct state relations with Albania, there can be little doubt that the British Government, quick enough to recognise reactionary regimes, would at last realise that no purpose is served in continuing to ignore the 30-year old People's Government of Albania.

Albania's Foreign Minister in his United Nations speech referred to China as 'an insurmountable obstacle to the plans of aggression and hegemony of the two super-powers. The whole of progressive mankind enthusiastically applauded last year the restoration of the legitimate rights of the People's

Republic of China in the United Nations. This represents a glowing victory of the great Chinese People's Republic and of its just external policy, and at the same time a victory for all the peace-loving and freedom-loving peoples of the world. That was the crowning of the struggle that Member states, including the People's Republic of Albania, have carried on unceasingly for over 20 years to put an end to the incredible situation that had been created in our Organisation. The presence of the People's Republic of China in the United Nations has strengthened many-fold the struggle of the anti-imperialist and anti-colonialist forces even here in the Organisation, the struggle of peace-loving member states against the two great imperialist powers and in favour of the rights of peoples and the cause of peace.'

So these two socialist peoples are linked by the closest fraternal bonds and just as China demonstrates that no country is too large and too populous for democratic centralism Albania proves that no country is too small and too sparsely populated to build a socialist society by its own independent effort.

THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN THE NEW ALBANIA

Chapter Sixteen

Socialist Man at Leisure

But having tried to explain the historical development of Albania and the revolutionary struggles of the Albanian people to create a new society, one is still left with the question of what the Albanian people are like, at work, at play, in their daily relationships with each other. What is the quality of life in socialist Albania?

The Albanians are disciplined and hard working but they are neither puritanical nor austere. Moral laxity of any kind is ruled out by social disapproval and there are certainly no displays in public of behaviour even mildly offensive, but what one notices most in any place where Albanians are gathered together is their natural gaiety and good humour.

They frown on the extravagant fashions exhibited by some young visitors to Albania from the west because they are very concerned about the influence on Albanian youth of the outlandish ideas of extreme individualism and self expression which are characteristic of the alienated youth of capitalist countries. But Albanian women, who are very good looking, dress attractively, use cosmetics and wear bikinis on the beaches as the most sensible form of swimwear. Indeed, the vast sandy beach at Durrës or any of the other excellent bathing resorts along the beautiful coast of the Adriatic and Ionian seas all the way down to Saranda, are good places to observe the Albanians in a holiday mood. Their liking for active sports in the open air and sunshine accounts for the strong, lithe, bronzed bodies of this handsome people.

One of their greatest pleasures is simply the enjoyment of each other's company. In every town or city the evening promenade is a feature of social life. At the end of the day's work the whole population comes out into the. broad

boulevards, to stroll about greeting friends, to have coffee or something to eat in one of the many open-air cafes or restaurants in this warm country – whole families to three generations taking the fragrant summer air together or young couples walking hand in hand or, perhaps, happy bands of children weaving in and out of the crowds in some extemporised game.

There is something strange to the visitor from the West in seeing children running about through the streets in such abandon without any surveillance. In *his* towns they would soon be decimated by traffic. In Albania, after the end of the working day, there are no lorries nor motor cars to be seen and the streets and avenues belong entirely to the people for their communal perambulation which gives each wide thoroughfare the appearance of a fair ground.

There are no private cars in Albania. Though motor cars and lorries are not yet made there, the export surplus is ample to buy from abroad all the transport needed and there are the skills and factories to service them and supply all the spare parts required. At first cars were made available to individual citizens on a points system, as in the Soviet Union or Eastern Europe, but some owners were charging those who did not possess them yet for lifts and there was keen competition to get one's name higher up on the list. This was seen as generating the kind of selfish bourgeois ethics rooted in private possession. So all cars were withdrawn and gathered into pools from which collectives can take what they need for work or recreation or for the use of foreign guests. The effort and investment which might have gone into supplying individual families with cars has gone instead into developing an excellent system of public transport with fares constantly being reduced toward the point of a completely free system of transport.

If the sight of so many family groups of grandparents, parents, children and even children's children walking, talking and taking refreshment together raises the question of why family relationships are so strong and satisfactory, the answer every one gives is that there is no economic restraint whatsoever compelling families to stay together. The only bond is that of mutual love and respect. That is not to

suggest, as will be seen, that there are no problems any more in connection with this aspect of life; but the context in which solutions can be sought is provided by a collective concern with the role of the family in socialist society as, in Enver Hoxha's words, 'the general spiritual atmosphere coloured by the ideals of parents and grown-up members of the family, their attitude toward labour and their contribution to society, which exert a decisive influence on the formation and cultivation of young people as future workers, citizens and revolutionaries.'

Or the evening crowds may seek various forms of entertainment in the local palace of culture where there are recitals, concerts, pageants or plays. They may go to cinemas where a growing number of the films shown are Albanian. They may enjoy the presentation in some large auditorium of that ever popular form, Estrada, which is the Albanian equivalent of the music hall – with acts by singers, musicians and acrobats, with dramatic sketches and comic turns. And in all these amusements and cultural activities the audiences are not merely passive in their enjoyment. Not only do they participate in the sense that every performance of any kind has developed collectively under the guidance of constructive criticism which everyone feels free to give but also because a large proportion of any gathering will belong themselves to some cultural group which no factory, school, office, co-operative farm nor institution of any kind is without. Indeed one has the impression that in leisure hours a good half of the population is always actively engaged in entertaining the other half.

National holidays celebrating the founding of the People's Republic, historical anniversaries, victories in the liberation war or in socialist construction raise to a higher degree the festive feeling to be encountered in the streets of the major towns. The broad treelined avenue leading from the statue of Scanderbeg in the centre of Tirana to the University on the outskirts of the city will be filled with representatives of the Democratic Front organisations, of factories and farms, of the armed services and young pioneers, marching past the reviewing stand near the Dajti Hotel under billowing red banners, shouting revolutionary slogans and paying their

respects to Party and state leaders and guests from abroad.

In country districts, too, there are regular occasions when thousands of people from the area and friends invited from the towns and the capital come together to celebrate some local event – like the annual fete at the village of Billisht, some fifteen miles from Korça, in honour of the formation of the First Batallion of partisans during the liberation war. Driving to the site of the gathering along a bumpy dusty road one sees streams of people walking along paths or across fields, men dressed in their best dark suits and often carrying their shoes in their hands, the women in traditional peasant costumes, red blouses, full gaily printed skirts and sandals, the older men wearing their medals, bereaved mothers of partisans killed in the fighting crying a little as they greet their dead sons' comrades and children shouting and laughing as they hurry toward the scene of the day's festivities.

On rising ground a grove of acacias provides shade from the hot sun. All around the grove are bulletin boards with pictures of the activities of the co-operatives in the area and the achievements of the rural electrification programme. Strung overhead are banners inscribed with such slogans as Rrofte Partie e Punes e Shqiperise – Long live the Albanian Party of Labour, Shqiperi, 'land of the eagles', is the Albanians' name for their country; and among the dances performed by the men in the course of the merrymaking will be the famous eagle dance. Other banners wish a long life to Enver Hoxha or set out the main themes to be taken up in a brief political meeting by a representative of the Central Committee, perhaps the veteran partisan Birro Kondi whose brother also a great partisan fighter died in an accident after the war – 'Without unmasking revisionism one cannot defeat imperialism' and 'the people of Albania and China's millions are more than a match for any enemy'. The local Party Secretary speaks of the changes in Albania's countryside and, specifically, in the Billisht district.

Then the vast crowd, more than 20,000, move to the long tables under the trees which are piled high with roast chickens and slabs of lamb, home made bread, cream cheese, boiled eggs, tomatoes and corn on the cob. Vast quantities of very good cold beer are drunk during and after the feast to

the sound of the constantly repeated toast Gezuer! – good health! There is much moving about and groups at the tables are broken up and reform as old comrades are discovered and greeted affectionately. One of the good survivals of feudal customs, along with the open-handed hospitality one encounters all over Albania, deepened and given a new fraternal significance by socialism, is the close demonstrative friendship between men. Partisans seeing each other after an interval embrace and kiss warmly. Moving about as freely and greeted as affectionately are the Party and State leaders who have come from Tirana to join in the celebrations – the Foreign Minister who is also a deputy from this region, an ambassador, several members of the Political Bureau and Enver Hoxha's younger sister.

Moving also among the tables are rhapsodes who extemporise songs for any occasion in the complicated polyphonic style of Albanian folk music – dressed traditionally in white caps, pleated white skirts and blouses with brown trimming and decorated with big black pompoms. They sing of the changes in the lives of the people brought by twenty-five years of socialism, of the advance toward communism. A young girl accompanied by her husband playing the clarinet sings a song exhorting women to respond to the Party's call. Some of the men have formed circles in the bright sunshine outside the grove and are performing energetic dances joined, to the enjoyment of those watching, by ministers and high Party officials.

This gay, colourful gathering in a country district, finding in old forms of music, dance and song an expression of their revolutionary feelings about the new Albania, this informal democracy of a comradeship in common tasks and aspirations which embraces everyone, no matter in what special capacity he may serve, conveys as adequately as anything could the quality of life in socialist Albania today.

Chapter Seventeen

Youth and Education

Albania, for all its continuous history of a people occupying the same territory for thousands of years and preserving their cultural identity through countless vicissitudes, for all its wealth of ancient monuments and living traditions of the past, gives the impression of being a young country. This is partly the rejuvenating effect of the new social system which was born out of the liberation war, is now vigorous and thriving and has a glorious future to look forward to. But it is also because there is, in fact, a high preponderance of children and young people compared with other European countries. The population under the conditions of socialism has doubled since the war. Far from creating problems this growth in numbers has remedied the chronic under-population of the country, which resulted from the hard conditions of the feudal past. Albania was and still remains a country with too few people – particularly with the expansion of agriculture to four times its pre-war level of production and the tremendous all round development of industry.

In any factory or industrial enterprise one is struck by the youth of the workers, the great majority of whom are under thirty. In the Tirana spare parts factory, for example, 80% of the 1700 workers are below thirty years of age and of the 55% of the labour force who are women the greater proportion are girls of twenty and younger – operating machines which in the older industrialised countries would only be handled by male operators well beyond their first youth. The same is true of men and women directors, specialists and Party and trade union representatives a great number of whom are in their early thirties.

Not only have those who were born and brought up under socialism adapted themselves more quickly to production work in the new factories, they have also taken the lead in the ideological struggle against bad customs from the past and religious superstition. To help put an end to the old subjection of women, hundreds of girls came together in an area where feudal traditions were strongest and as a political act renounced the betrothals which their parents had contracted for them when they were only children. In many towns and districts young people acting on their own initiative have taken over and converted into gymnasia or cultural centres mosques, churches and basilicas which had fallen into disuse.

Before the war of all European countries Albania alone resembled the colonial and semi-colonial countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America in respect to poverty and illiteracy. In 1938 more than 80% of the population was illiterate and in parts of the countryside it was as high as 95%. Albania was the only country in Europe without a single university.

The struggle against illiteracy began during the war among the partisan units and in the liberated areas. In a resolution of the Party in March, 1943, communists were recommended 'to spread culture in the countryside, to organise courses against illiteracy in order to give our peasants the capacity to participate in the benefits of culture which the former reactionary regimes had denied them.'

After the war the campaign against illiteracy was waged on two fronts – teaching all men and women up to 40 years of age to read and write and establishing a network of schools to prevent the emergence of new illiterate masses.

Organisations of youth and women and the trade unions were mobilised in this campaign under the slogan: 'In order to build we must acquire knowledge and in order to acquire knowledge we must be able to study and learn.' Tens of thousands of those previously illiterate were enrolled in night schools without giving up production work, graduating first from elementary classes, then from seven grade schools and even completing secondary and higher school courses. By 1955 illiteracy among all those under 40 had been wiped out and not long afterward it was abolished among older people

too. The night schools were maintained to consolidate this achievement and to keep people, particularly in the rural areas, from slipping back again.

The educational system which was established aims at the all round development of the younger generation to prepare them to take an active part in the construction of a new socialist society. 'Its task is to impart to young men and women sound scientific knowledge, to inculcate the Marxist-Leninist world outlook, to give them professional skill and a correct attitude toward work, to imbue them with the spirit of socialist patriotism and proletarian internationalism, thus ensuring their moral, physical and cultural education.' The system includes pre-school education from three to seven years of age, general education (the eight year schools) from seven to fifteen, vocational training in a short nine month course or a full two year general course of technology and higher education at the University for three or four years. The Tirana State University has many departments covering 29 special studies and there are branches in most of the major cities. The system also includes night and correspondence schools for adults.

By 1963 the educational system had developed to the point where every man and woman in the country was obliged to complete the course of the eight year schools. In 1969 in 4,971 schools compared with 674 before the war, there were 543,031 students as against the pre-war number of 58,339. Vocational schools were training 22,800 specialists as against 1,511. The greater proportion of students in eight year and high schools are boarders and of the 19,500 student boarders 13,300 receive full state scholarships and 3,500 half scholarships. There are no tuition fees in Albania.

But having created the basic system of education the country since about 1965 has entered a new phase of improving the system qualitatively to correspond with the needs of the further development of socialist society. This has meant nothing less than revolutionising both the methods of teaching and the content of courses. It is really the point Marx made in the Feuerbach theses about 'educating the educators' and it represents one of the most serious problems confronting any society in establishing a truly socialist

educational system. Those with the best technical qualifications for teaching posts in the early days of a new socialist state – and in a country as educationally backward as Albania had been, the choice would not be wide – might be the least qualified politically to fit youth for its role in the new society. Instead of preparing young people to make their social contribution by putting collective above self-interest and teaching them to defend the workers socialist state, schools could become centres of bourgeois influence paving the way ideologically for the restoration of capitalism.

The movement in Albania for revolutionising education had from the beginning taken the double directional form of the mass line – from the masses to the leadership and from the leadership to the masses. It could only begin when the political consciousness of the masses had reached such a level that they could themselves become critical of survivals from the past of attitudes and institutions inimical to socialism. In 1965, revolutionary students, particularly in the educational establishments of the capital city Tirana, becoming aware of the discrepancy between Marxism-Leninism and the methods by which they were taught and the content of that teaching, began to demand a new relationship between teachers and students, the right to have a say in the choice of texts and the planning of courses and closer contacts with the production centres where they would be working on leaving school.

Enver Hoxha welcomed this initiative and formulated random complaints and criticisms into a revolutionary strategy for overhauling this whole vital section of society. In his great speech to the Fifth Party Congress on November 1, 1966, he stressed the need of linking teaching and education much more closely to life and labour. Speaking not only as a Marxist-Leninist but as one who had been a teacher himself, at the Korça academy before his dismissal on political grounds, he explained the political necessity of an 'unceasing development of education to meet the demands of socialist society;' and pointed out that 'Our schools, for all the improvement in teaching and education, have not yet rid themselves of bourgeois pedagogy and revisionist influences . . . It is indispensable to revolutionise further the educational system . . . It is particularly necessary to take radical

measures for the improvement of ideological and political education and for educating youth through labour . . . There is still too much formalism and verbalism, passivity on the part of pupils and stifling the personality of the young on the part of the teachers, too much officialdom in the relations between teachers and pupils resulting in conservative and patriarchal methods of education . . . There can be no talk of revolutionising our schools without revolutionising the great army of teachers who must set the example of a communist attitude toward labour and life.'

He exposed the root of the problem in the detachment of schooling from the rest of community life as a special realm where the teacher is dominant and everything is subjected to its pedagogical aspect; 'and yet teachers have usually been entirely cut off from production. They felt the needs and profited from the changes in our economy but in their teaching they pursued methods which were completely anachronistic. The Party personnel who were mainly concerned with the political, economic and ideological transformation of our country were not interested enough in schools to appreciate the changes that needed to be made in their development.'

The context in which these revolutionary changes could be made was the understanding that 'Life is a great school and school itself nothing but an integral part of life. Therefore the school should be closely and harmoniously linked with the activities, the work and thought of men in society, serving them, and through them, society as a whole . . . Our schools are not merely to provide additional personnel for government and planning departments but to turn out en masse people equipped with the knowledge and science to play their full role as socialist citizens. Learning and education should not be considered as a means of speculation and personal profit, as it is in bourgeois countries, but as a powerful weapon in the hands of the new men of socialist society, in order to build our society, to promote our common socialist production and to develop socialist culture in the service of our society.'

At Enver Hoxha's suggestion the Fifth Party Congress set up, under the direct supervision of the Central Committee, an

educational commission drawing its members from the fields of education, industry and mining, from state farms and co-operatives, from the mass organisations of youth and women and from the ranks of physicians, musicians, writers and philosophers. It was considered that such varied representation was necessary to ensure the co-ordination of schools with the whole economic and social development of the country and to sort out priorities in the course of demands for trained personnel made on behalf of each of these fields of activity.

In the schools and in the University teachers and professors had to adopt new methods and learn to accept the criticism of students as part of their own socialist rehabilitation. A few found the extension of democratic centralism to the educational system, with students taking an active role in organising school life, too much of a break with the old academic traditions they had hoped to see re-established. They were released to go into production work, perhaps, to return to teaching when they have learned from workers the socialist ideology of the working class. And students, too, had to learn more thoroughly that socialist education has nothing to do with getting a degree in order to become 'a man of authority' or to 'secure a comfortable post with a fat salary'. A student is judged not on the marks he gets in competition with his fellows but on the help he gives others in mastering subjects. So successful has this approach proved that in such places as the Tirana Secondary School of Culture students through mutual aid in lessons have realised a hundred percent promotion rate and earned commendation for their exemplary tidiness and protection of socialist property.

Courses in Marxism-Leninism were made a living part of the curriculum and not just a routine subject to be got through in a mechanical way. Texts and lectures on dialectical and historical materialism were related to Albania's own revolutionary history and students and teachers learned to apply the principles of scientific socialism to their own problems and those of their society. And since practice is the essence of Marxism-Leninism, students and teachers began to participate more actively in the political and economic life of

the country, leaving their books and laboratories to study the application of theory on the production and social front.

What all this ferment amounted to was carrying class struggle, the confrontation between bourgeois and socialist ideology, into the schools where the youth of the country were being formed. Enver Hoxha returning to the subject of 'the further revolutionising of our schools' in a speech to the Political Bureau in March 1967 described what was happening in the educational system. 'During all this process of restless, not spontaneous but genuinely revolutionary development, the struggle of opposites creates progress and the dialectical development of opposites brings about a qualitative transformation which takes our society from a high stage of socialist achievement to a still higher one. In this major revolution the decisive role is played by the masses guided by the communist party of the proletariat and its Marxist-Leninist ideology . . . Our schools are an important arena in this process.'

As much as had already been done, he called for further efforts still to make 'our schools forges of the new communist man of sound political and theoretical outlook, with the keen appreciation and taste of a Marxist-Leninist revolutionary, endowed with a daring, creative and realistic spirit . . . Our schools must play their full part in the ideological battle to prevent socialist Albania from ever changing its red revolutionary colour.'

This address was followed by the setting up of a Central Commission on education to continue the work of the previous commission but on a broader mass basis. It was headed by the great wartime leader and member of the Political Bureau, Mehmet Shehu, who convened a national forum on education at Tirana in April. 'Abiding always by the mass line,' he told those assembled at the meeting, 'our Party has made it a habit to consult the masses before taking any important decision. Therefore in connection with the further revolutionisation of our schools the Party considers it necessary to organise a public discussion throughout the country on every aspect of this question.'

Those taking part in the nation-wide forum were all teachers without exception and all students from the ninth

year on, the working masses, primarily the working class and those parents who wished to take part. Many of the discussions were held in the large production centres where views could be exchanged with workers so that their recommendations on making education respond to the requirements of production could be taken into account and the working class could be mobilised for completing the revolutionising of the schools begun by the students themselves.

For over a year public discussions and debates took place from one end of Albania to the other with complete freedom for everyone to make any suggestions he liked. All proposals offered, whether they were contradictory or not provided they were not at variance with the general principles of socialism, were collected in a final document which was then resubmitted for further discussion. During this vast democratic exercise, which was fully reported at every stage by press and radio, over 21,000 meetings were held attended by 600,000 people, or more than half the adult population of the whole country, at which contributions were made and recorded by 160,000 individual citizens. As Mehmet Shehu summed up the discussions: 'They corroborated in practice the principle that the socialist revolution forges ahead through class struggle with the active participation of the masses who are not only the object but also the subject of the ideological and cultural revolution.'

When the results of this great national forum on education had been finally co-ordinated they were embodied in a report submitted to the Central Committee in June 1969 and unanimously approved. Among the practical steps taken after the public discussions were the following:

All students graduating from secondary school are required to undergo a probationary period at production work before being admitted to any higher educational institution. No one who has not worked for one year as a simple labourer and received the approval of his or her workers' collective will be passed for further education.

Schools will provide courses at all levels and at suitable times to accommodate workers and peasants in part-time education while continuing in their jobs, during which period

they will work only a six hour day while being paid at the full rate.

Pre-school education will be extended to all children between three and six years of age and the age for starting school will be lowered from seven to six.

Schools will be provided for national minorities — particularly those in which Greek is taught as well as Albanian.

Secondary schools will be places not simply for study but for study and work with at least a quarter of the student's time devoted to production.

Examinations lay too much stress on rote learning. Students should study systematically over the whole course of their education not to receive marks but to become useful to society.

The idea that the most suitable method of teaching is from books, that only theory learned from books is culture must be opposed. Theory is derived from practice, is enriched by practice, is confirmed by practice and corrected by practice.

The idea that secondary vocational schools train middle grade technicians, that gymnasia turn out employees and that he who has completed higher education must necessarily be appointed a cadre is a careerist and bourgeois conception. Every one serves wherever he is needed.

While students are free to comment and criticise and are encouraged to participate in the organisation of school life there must also be proletarian discipline. 'The spirit of this discipline which should guide both teachers and students has nothing in common with indifferentism and liberalism, with petty bourgeois anarchy and violation of rules, with abuse of democratic rights or accentuating only rights and forgetting obligations. Proletarian discipline requires the all round development of criticism and self-criticism on the part of teachers and students alike.

During vacations there are holiday camps for young people and pioneer camps for children. Just as study is combined with work in school, play is combined with work in these camps in the mountains or on the coast. Youth groups can be seen everywhere during the summer planting trees on the hillside, terracing abrupt slopes, or, perhaps, helping in the

tasks of co-operative farms; and even the children from seven to thirteen in the pioneer camps help with the cooking and serving of meals, keeping the cabins and grounds clean and doing an hour's work a day in the vegetable gardens or in the fields. The same high spirits and cheerful enthusiasm that go into games and athletic contests go also into this collective work out in the sunshine amid the scenic splendour of Albania's magnificent mountains or along its varied coastline of sandy beaches and coves or rocky spines plunging sheer into the blue translucent water of the Adriatic. They look well on it, Albania's youth, bronzed and fit and happy; and they are learning from their earliest age the value of things in terms of the muscular toil, sweat and dexterity that go into making them. It is an appreciation of value in this practical sense that underlies the understanding of, and the response to, all spiritual and cultural values.

The pioneer camp at Durrës is named Qemal Stafa after the secretary of the Communist Youth section who died heroically in the war. The cabins and play grounds are under pine trees in sight of the sea. The 1,600 children are divided into four battalions which plan their own activities and compete with each other in sports. They learn about the history of their country and current socialist developments by mounting their own exhibitions of photographs, drawings and captions. They visit factories and the dock area and meet workers who explain their jobs to them; and well known workers, heroes of labour from the mines or various industrial enterprises, come to the camp to lecture and watch the children's games.

One popular game is the re-enactment of episodes from the partisan fighting when some veteran has described the event to them; but it is difficult to get the game started because no child wants to play the part of the fascists. After the game is over both sides kiss each other. Every night a company of a hundred children with two blankets and some food go up into the hills to sleep out and learn about camping. There are music, drama and physical education teachers on the staff who are assisted by people who come out from town to help.

To visit the Qemal Stafa pioneer camp just behind the sandy shore of the Adriatic, to see the children playing and

working, completely free but already disciplined, too, from their life at school and in the family and already expressing in their games and activities a wholesome collective spirit is to recognise that Albania's socialist future is assured.

Chapter Eighteen

Women and the Socialist Family

Before the war in the northern regions of Albania a rigid feudal social system, codified under the name of the Canon of Lek Dukagjini, was strictly observed. According to this canon which had been formulated in the Middle Ages and still dominated social relations 'the husband is entitled to beat his wife and to tie her up in chains when she defies his word and orders . . . The father is entitled to beat, tie in chains, imprison or kill his son or daughter . . . The wife is obliged to kneel in obeisance to her husband.' In central and southern Albania the position of women was not much better. Religious superstition had a strong grip on people. By Mohammedan law a man was permitted four wives and could divorce any of them by a simple unilateral declaration. A woman was not even present at the celebration of her own wedding and she had no rights in her children. Catholicism in its most mediaeval form supported the same enslavement and degradation of women and tortured them spiritually as well.

The end of those enslaving customs began during the liberation war when women, shoulder to shoulder with men, fought all the fiercer to emancipate themselves from a double oppression. Ranged opposite them on the battlefield were not only the fascist occupying forces, but those reactionary Albanian elements that supported them, feudal chieftains like John Markagjon, religious leaders and, indeed, all who in wanting to see the country remain as it had been were condemning women to the old life of servitude. Heroines who died in the war like Zoja Curre, Bule Najpi, Margarita Tutulani, Liri Gerro, Qeriba Deri, Floresha Myteveliu, Bukurie Bazo and Penelope Pirro had not only ensured the freedom of Albania but also the freedom of women in an

Albania from which the disgrace of the past enshrined in such infamous social laws as the Canon had been expunged by their blood.

The Constitution adopted after the war guaranteed to women absolutely equal rights with men in the political, economic and social life of the country; but it was in establishing a socialist base for society that the Party and people cut off the roots of feminine subjection in the institution of private property. Feudal economic interests had given birth to the 'superiority' of the male over the female, to patriarchal authority over children, to loveless marriages contracted by parents, to the disdain for girls who, since they would belong to someone else anyway as far as succession rights were concerned, might as well be sold off or got rid of. Economic interests in bourgeois society also make women dependent on men and children dependent on parents and, since there is no real freedom beyond the limits set by economic dependence and the laws of private property and inheritance, any apparent freedom of women takes purely individualistic forms and the liberation of women does not exist – only 'the emancipation of the coquettes of the bourgeoisie'. Socialism by abolishing private property, creating equal economic rights and providing social education for children knocks the props out from under the submission of women to men and children to parents. Enver Hoxha describes the socialist emancipation of women 'led by our Party as not a feminist movement but the advancement of women to equal rights with men in all fields so that they march together shoulder to shoulder with the same sentiments, aims and ideals toward communism.' Socialism transforms the relations between the sexes into entirely personal relations.

But not at once and not simply mechanically by creating the economic conditions for such a transformation. Here too there is the need for ideological struggle between old customs and ways of thought and new, a class struggle between the feudal or bourgeois conception of marriage and the relations of the sexes and the socialist conception.

Certainly the drawing of women into every sphere of productive and social life by the provision of creches, by the

lightening of domestic work, by all the steps taken by the state to enable them to exercise the equality legally granted them has played a major part in putting the relations between the sexes on a new footing as well as making a tremendous contribution to socialist construction. As Enver Hoxha said in a speech to the Central Committee in 1967 on the further struggle for the complete emancipation of women: 'Only actual life in all its grandeur can give us an adequate idea of what a great vital force the Party set free in the emancipation of women. What progressive creative talent lay hidden in this great part of our population. What marvels they are doing and will be doing hereafter and with what incalculable moral and material values they will enrich our socialist life!'

In 1938 there were 668 women workers in all Albania, mostly girls of 14 or 16 working a ten hour day for appallingly low wages. By 1967 over 248,000 women, which is 42% of rural and urban workers, were engaged in production work on exactly the same terms as men. With the exception of hard or dangerous jobs which would be injurious to their health, there is no profession and no branch of industry where they are not employed at every level; and in some sectors they are a majority of the work force, as in textiles at 73%, food processing 52% and public health and sanitation at 69%.

By 1967 there were 40 women representatives in the People's Assembly, 10,878 had been elected to the People's Councils (36%), 1168 to the People's Courts (also 36%) and 8,200 were members of the Albanian Party of Labour; but at only 12% of the total membership this figure was criticised by Enver Hoxha as much too low and by the time of the Sixth Party Congress in 1971 the proportion of women in the Party had risen to 22%. Out of a population of just over two million there are 300,000 women organised in the Women's Union and women play a leadership role as factory managers, trade union secretaries and members of the planning commissions.

There has been a campaign for more training facilities for women. Although 37% of all technicians are women, the proportion receiving specialised training or admitted to the institutes of higher education and the University of Tirana is still considered unsatisfactory. There is a general awareness of

the need to raise the number of women in those branches of industry where they are still not sufficiently represented, like electrical engineering, construction work and machine making – especially since young women in the tractor machine shop at Tirana have demonstrated their ability to handle all types of machinery.

Not only does the full participation of women in production contribute to the solution of the continuing problem of a labour shortage which is as characteristic of a socialist economy as unemployment is of capitalism; but it is also important politically. 'Women workers,' Stalin has said, 'urban and rural workers are the greatest reserve of the working class. This reserve represents half the population. On whether this reserve of women is with or against the working class depends the destiny of the proletarian movement, the triumph or defeat of the proletarian revolution and the triumph or defeat of proletarian state power.'

The complete emancipation of women to share fully in production work depends on establishing new socialist relations in the family as well as on the state creation of conditions enabling women to combine their roles of workers and mothers. They must also be delivered from the drudgery of household chores and liberated from any survivals of patriarchal attitudes. This is partly achieved by the adequate provision of creches and nursery schools at minimal costs, by cheap, wholesome canteen meals at midday, by half-cooked food which can be picked up on the way home and quickly prepared in the evening, by launderettes and other labour-saving devices. But more important is the reconsideration of the division of labour within the household itself. If there is no work which women cannot do, it follows that there is also no work, like domestic tasks, which is peculiarly theirs.

Many of these tasks can be done by older children brought up with a correct attitude toward work; but men, particularly, are learning to take their full share of domestic responsibilities, dropping off young children at creches on the way to work, doing the shopping, dividing the housework and, if their wives are attending night school or undergoing special training, taking on the whole burden of domestic chores.

It could not be said that all men have taken readily to these changes. In his speech on promoting the role of women in socialist society to the Central Committee, Enver Hoxha had to admit that 'although many prejudices have been removed, we would be erring if we thought we had set everything right and could leave it to time to correct any remaining deficiencies . . . Despite economic, political and ideological advances there still exist among many people, and even among communists, erroneous patriarchal attitudes.' Mehmet Shehu appealed to the men of Albania to banish forever remnants of male chauvinism which were inimical to socialist relations within the family and to write to him personally about some practical step they had taken to remedy this defect.

Albania, probably because it did not pass through a capitalist phase in which commodity exchange dominates culture and commodities mediate all human relationships, is completely free of the commoditisation of sex in terms of various forms of the debasement of women like pornography or the general bourgeois voyeurism of Western 'arts' and 'literature'; but there are other wrong attitudes about relations between men and women stemming from the backwardness of the past. 'Erroneous ideas about love exist among us,' Enver Hoxha has said, 'Very often love is stigmatised as something immoral which leads women to moral laxity and men to degeneracy. But if there is anything which has nothing to do with these vices it is genuine love.' To explain the socialist attitude toward relations between the sexes he quoted Engels 'that marriage based on love is moral and it is only where love exists that real marriage exists too'; and Marx's dictum that 'the development of a given historical period can always be determined by the degree of progress of women toward freedom, for the triumph of human nature is manifested most clearly in the relations between husband and wife.'

Problems of the family and family relations are not only a private concern but the concern of society as a whole. Even comrades devoted to the line of the Party who are good workers endowed with a commendable socialist spirit may allow themselves behaviour in the family which is incompatible with communist ethics. This cannot be permitted to

continue without prejudicing the role of the family as the child's first introduction to socialist life. At the same time the Party must remember the delicate and complicated nature of family relations and avoid any intervention not guided by tact and good judgement.

In June 1965 a new Family Code was approved elaborating certain rights guaranteed in the Constitution and it came into force in 1966. Amongst its provisions are the following:

Marriage is contracted with the free will of husband and wife and rests on solid feelings of love, equality and mutual respect. Only monogamous marriages are recognised.

Partners in marriage can choose as their surname that of husband or wife or each may keep his or her original name or add them together.

A wife can choose her work or profession without her husband's permission and the handling of the family income is managed by mutual agreement.

Personal property held by either before marriage remains his or hers and anything acquired afterwards is joint property. All children regardless of sex are entitled to equal shares in the inheritance of joint personal property and the wife is the heir of first rank.

Divorce is allowed when a marriage has lost all meaning and cohabitation has become intolerable. Causes for divorce are continuous quarrels, maltreatment, breach of conjugal faith, permanent mental illness or punishment for serious crimes. There is no distinction between husband or wife in the right to sue for divorce and the rearing of children is confided to that parent who in the court's opinion is better qualified to bring them up.

All parental rights belong to both parents equally and disagreements are settled by tutelage committees or by the courts.

Single mothers enjoy all due respect and the state guarantees their economic security and protection. Children born outside marriage are equal in every way to those born within.

Abortions are allowed after consultation with a committee of doctors. Birth control is a matter of personal choice. There is no family planning in the sense of national campaigns to

limit births because Albania is an underpopulated country in which all births are welcomed.

In the emancipation of women and the socialist transformation of family relationships, as in all other aspects of social life, the Albanians would not claim to have solved all problems finally; but it can be claimed for them that family life today is already a happy example of the wholesome results of setting about solving those problems the right way in the right social context.

Chapter Nineteen

Health

Before the war Albania's backwardness was reflected in the incidence of those diseases most characteristic of primitive, poverty-stricken countries – malaria, tuberculosis, syphilis and trachoma. People infected with tuberculosis kept it quiet in order not to wreck a family economy already precarious enough – particularly in the north where undernourishment was prevalent and meals often consisted of a single chunk of maize bread.

But the disease causing the most harm was malaria. The swampy coastal region made Albania one of the most malarial countries in the world. Even in the higher areas of Korça and Pogradeç, which are now health resorts, stagnant water provided the breeding grounds for mosquitoes; and what are today the most fertile fields in the south were utterly deserted because of malaria. Half the population was infected. And yet after the huge drainage programme which cleared the swamps and stagnant water and reclaimed hundreds of thousands of acres for farming, the situation had changed so radically that recently when some anopheles mosquitoes were required for laboratory tests none could be found!

The beautiful people of the Pulati, Shala and Mertur highlands were often infected with syphilis, sometimes whole villages being stricken.

There were only ten hospitals with some 800 beds in the whole country, one maternity ward with 15 beds and 36 dispensaries. There was one doctor for 8,527 inhabitants, compared with one doctor for 1,200 inhabitants today; and only 48 new doctors came into practice during the whole 13 years of Zog's reign. The infant mortality rate was 162 per

thousand and the average span of life only 38.3 years. Now it is 68 years.

Even before liberation partisan field hospitals not only treated the wounded but improved the conditions of health in the rural areas. The partisan dispensary set up in the Ramica caves near Vlora in 1943 to care for the wounded of the Battle of Gjormi became the first field hospital and was followed by the establishment of other field hospitals at Kuç, Poliçan, Voskopoja and other places inaccessible to the enemy. It was out of these beginnings that the public health service developed.

The first step taken after the war was to provide free medical examination for everyone and free medical service to those employed by the state and their families, to all suffering from contagious diseases and children under the age of four. By 1963 the free medical service was extended to the entire population. No matter how long a person may be ill and no matter what the expenses of his treatment he pays absolutely nothing.

From the beginning it was intended that the health service should be preventive and all the inhabitants of any district are under regular observation at the district clinic. On a person's first examination a file is opened and from then on the condition of his health is kept under constant review. Hygienic instruction is given to all – particularly children and young people. Preventive medicine also includes campaigns waged against infectious diseases, mass inoculations, special checks on the health of those in the food processing industry and the supervision of the conditions of health in factories and all places of work.

By 1967 the number of hospitals had increased to 97 with eleven times the number of beds as in 1938. There were 113 maternity wards, and five TB sanatoria. There are ten times more doctors; five times more dentists and four times more pharmacists. Over 180 times as much is spent on public health as in 1938.

Before liberation no doctor had ever set foot in such regions as Dukagjini or Skrapari, Puka or Mirdita. Now all these once isolated places have their rural hospitals, maternity wards and clinics. Peasants are coming from these

remote districts to be trained in medicine. There are public health centres in each locality and model houses and model villages have been constructed to show peasants how to improve their living conditions.

All births in the cities take place in maternity centres and most births in the countryside are under medical supervision. Vaccine against scarlet fever is provided by China and diphtheria and polio have been completely eliminated. The natural increase in the population has grown from 16.9 per thousand in 1938 to 27.6.

Along with campaigns against diseases has gone a campaign against superstitious ideas about health. Till fairly recently people in the more isolated regions still believed in the evil eye and carried talismans and amulets to ward off its effects. Some put their faith in scraps of paper on which priests had written passages from the Bible. Shkodra mountaineers thought that every person had a worm in his ear which was the centre of life and if the worm ceased living the person also died.

A peasant named Dervish Alla from Gosa had a three year old child whose limbs had gone numb from a touch of tetanus. Because a neighbour had lost two children by relying on the incantations of the local pastor, Dervish Alla took his little daughter to the clinic which Dr Musa Ohri had just set up. The doctor told him to take the child to hospital at once. But on the way Dervish Alla began to wonder if he was doing the right thing and if the jinn who had cast a spell on the child might not be angry. He went to the pastor who said the child was undoubtedly worse because she had been taken to the clinic and he began calling up spirits to left and right. But the child got worse still. Fortunately Dr Ohri decided to follow up the case and when he did not find the child in hospital he hurried to Gosa. The child was saved and has now grown into a woman with a child of her own.

Chapter Twenty

Arts and Culture

The key to the development of Albania's art and literature since the war is given in Enver Hoxha's 1966 Report. 'Our socialist art and culture should be firmly based on our native soil, on our wonderful people, arising from the people and serving them to the full. They should be clear and comprehensible but never vulgar and thoughtless. Our Party is for creative works in which the deep ideological content and the broad popular spirit are realised in an artistic form capable of stirring the feelings profoundly and touching the hearts of the people, in order to inspire and mobilise them for great deeds. We must intensify our struggle for a revolutionary art and literature of socialist realism . . . As in every other field, a sharp class struggle is taking place here also between the two ideologies – Marxist-Leninist materialist ideology on the one hand and feudal and bourgeois ideology on the other. Decadent bourgeois culture and art are alien to socialism. We oppose them and at the same time we appreciate and make use of everything that is progressive, democratic and revolutionary; critically viewed in the light of our own proletarian ideology.'

All culture is class culture. All literature and art belong to definite classes and serve quite specific political ends. It is as much an illusion to suppose that culture transcends class differences as to believe that the state stands above conflicting class interests. Bourgeois culture is the ideology of capitalism which is based on exploitation. Working class culture is the ideology of socialism which eliminates the exploitation of man by man. These two world views confront each other as a reflection of the class conflict between the bourgeoisie and the working class which, in one form or

another, is universal in this epoch of the transition from capitalism to socialism. Albanian art and literature are firmly committed in this world-wide conflict.

But while Albanian culture shares the same ideology with the culture of any other country where the dictatorship of the proletariat has been established, it still has, as Enver Hoxha explained, a specific quality of its own. 'Our socialist art and culture have not come out of nothing but are based on the historical development of our society, on its spiritual life and the best traditions of our people. To rely on these popular traditions of the past and of our own times is essential to the creation of true literary and artistic values and the promotion of the originality of Albanian culture. It is putting into practice the Marxist-Leninist principle that our art and literature must be socialist in content and national in form.'

A good example of this is provided by Albanian opera, with its themes taken from the epic liberation struggles of the people or from their heroic efforts in socialist construction and with its musical form based on the rich traditional folk art in which Albania abounds. Opera itself is not a traditional form, though the Italian operas of Verdi, Puccini and other composers were very popular. It is, for Albania, a new art form created to meet the cultural needs of the people.

The Institute of Folklore in Tirana has collected a vast store of material on dance, song and music down the centuries, culled from the different regions of the country – the single voice songs of the north and the complex polyphonic folk music of the south. Lyric, erotic, ritualistic, allegoric and epic works are all available for the musician and poet who want to draw on the past for modes of expression which are peculiarly Albanian.

The magnificent Palace of Culture at Tirana has among its many amenities a well-equipped theatre for opera seating more than a thousand. Admission is very cheap at two and a half leks a ticket or less than a packet of cigarettes and there are special shows at even lower rates for parties of farmers, workers, soldiers or students. The operas, ballets and pageants presented at the theatre also travel around the country, even up into the highlands. At first only the simpler

shows were taken to remote areas but in consultation with the people of those regions it was decided to present more sophisticated works with the villagers interrupting the performance if there was anything they wished to have explained.

The earliest presentations in the Palace of Culture were either traditional dances and recitals or works from abroad. Then in 1959 it was decided to create the first large-scale Albanian opera. It was called *Mrika* and its theme was the construction of the great Karl Marx hydro-electric plant. Mrika was the heroine who led the mass mobilisation of workers to capture saboteurs sent into the country from Yugoslavia and Greece to blow up the dam. An epic opera on the life of Scanderbeg involving a cast of 230 was composed by Preng Jakova with a libretto by the poet Lazer Siliqi. Other titles include *The Heroines* by Vangjo Nova and Luigj Gurakuqi, on the subject of student resistance to the Germans and *Girls of the Mountains* composed for the celebration of the Jubilee Year in 1969 by Nikolla Zoraqi with book by Loni Papa.

There are also ballets like *Fatosi Partizan*, the child guerrillas, and musical comedies on such themes as a group of women building a new theatre for their community.

In the arts, too, the mass line is applied to the creation of new works. Before opening, an opera will be shown to representatives of the actors' collective and workers from co-operatives and factories, and their opinions are sought on the general content of the new piece and on details about settings, costumes and so forth. Such criticisms as 'we want the diction to be clearer' or 'that doesn't look like the inside of a worker's house' are taken into account in getting the work ready for the first night. And even after that, newspaper criticisms or suggestions by members of the audience will result in additional changes during the actual run.

Often a new presentation will touch on a controversial subject and there will be discussions up and down the country about the issue itself and about the way it has been dealt with in the work in question. An operetta on the conflict between women who feel that there is no kind of

work which they cannot do and people who believe that there are jobs too dangerous or too hard for women or, perhaps, simply too unfeminine, gave rise to lengthy debates about where the line should be drawn which involved people from every district. A domestic comedy by Spiro Çomora about progressive grandfather and grandchildren making common cause against a father with reactionary ideas, raised a storm of discussion about the attitudes of different generations in relation to socialism.

Dramatic art after having remained undeveloped for a long period revived during the liberation war with partisan actors, script in one hand and rifle in the other, helping to mobilise and inspire the masses by their portrayal of the issues of the national struggle. These groups became the nucleus of the People's Dramatic Theatre. In addition to plays reflecting the revolutionary efforts of workers in town and country are also presented the works of world playwrights like Shakespeare or Moliere.

In 1952 the New Albania Film Studio came into operation. The first productions were newsreels and documentaries – a visit by Enver Hoxha to the northern districts and the transformation of the countryside, a feature on Albanian folk dance and films dealing with various new developments on the agricultural and industrial front. But there was a great need for feature films so that cinemas, with an attendance of ten million a year, would no longer be dependent on unsuitable material. This was particularly true as films from the Soviet Union or Eastern Europe had increasingly to be classed with decadent bourgeois films as not acceptable to Albanian audiences. Among recently made full-length features have been 'Our Land', 'Echo on the Sea Shore', 'A Special Day', 'The Early Years', 'The Commissar of Light', 'The Silent Duel', 'Open Horizons' and 'The Ambush'. Many films deal with heroic episodes in the liberation struggle, like 'Triumph over Death', the story of the heroines Bule Najpi and Persephone Kokedhima who defied the Gestapo or 'The Eighth in Bronze' which uses the setting up of a bronze bust of a partisan hero in his native village to recall the stirring days of the anti-fascist war. But many of the films also deal with contemporary problems like

the conflict in 'Two Old Wounds' between a husband and wife deeply devoted to each other whose careers take them to different places. 'The Traces' begins like a murder mystery but proves to be a tragedy of a man who forgets his class allegiance. One of the latest films to be made, based on a screenplay by Dhimiter Xhuvani and called 'The Fitter', is the love story of a young man and a young woman who work in the same factory.

Reference has already been made to the popular art of the Estrada – vaudeville performances staged by the cultural groups of every factory, farm and institution of any kind. Many of the skits are as funny as the old silent film comedies of the West with the additional ingredient of sharp political satire.

There is a continuous search for new talent by committees composed of artists and parents. The most promising young people are sent to the appropriate dramatic or music school in Tirana. All artists regard themselves as teachers as well as performers or creators and they are judged as much by their encouragement and training of aspirants as by their own work. Although there are great artists of the theatre like Maria Logoreci and Kadri Roshi, there is no star system and the whole emphasis is on collective effort. All actors and artists spend one month a year at some other kind of work – as mechanics, typographers, agricultural workers or bench hands – to maintain their links with the working people and to keep their artistic values rooted in the knowledge of the value of things which can only come through 'sweating on a job'.

There are no individualistic composers or writers working on their own and regarding various forms of idiosyncratic self-expression as the highest form of art. They belong either to one of the musical or dramatic collectives or to the Writers' Union.

The Writers' Union has its roots in the national movement and the liberation struggle. Five hundred years of Turkish rule did not extinguish the Albanian language nor the thirst of the people for their own art and culture. Then in the period of national revival from the middle of the Nineteenth Century to the early part of the Twentieth distinguished

writers and poets began to emerge – like Naim Frashëri, Konstantin Kristoforidhi, Vaso Pasha and many others. After national independence was proclaimed in 1912 there was a period of 'critical realism' characterised by strong national feeling and a fierce indictment of feudal and bourgeois rule which was stifling all progressive sentiments. Writers like Millosh Gjergi Nikolla, better known by his pen name, Migjeni, Fan Noli and Ndre Mjeda came to the fore; and in 1930 the 'Group of Thirty' was founded by Migjeni and not only criticised existing society but began to point the way forward. Literary magazines with a Marxist influence began to appear, like New World which came out in 1936.

Of this period of bourgeois nationalism Enver Hoxha has said: 'The epoch of revival is a democratic revolutionary period of major importance in the history and literature of our people . . . They fought with rifle and pen for the freedom and enlightenment of the people. We should impart to our own people today the positive merits of these men of the revival . . . But we should not forget for a moment that they had a negative side too which must be subjected to Marxist-Leninist criticism. These weaknesses lie in their idealistic philosophical conceptions.'

During the anti-fascist war there was a great sorting out of the would-be progressives who ended up collaborating with the enemy and the real progressives who committed themselves wholeheartedly to the liberation movement. After the formation of the Party in 1941 these genuine progressives were put in charge of propaganda in the various regions. Aleks Caçi, who supplied some of the information used in this chapter, was one of the writers assigned to propaganda work in one of the front line areas. The first issue of *Zeri i Popullit*, Voice of the People, came out in August, 1942, followed by a paper for youth, *Call to Liberty*. Poems, skits and reportage circulated widely and broadsheets, beautifully and inspiringly written to appeal to the people, turned up everywhere – even on the bulletin boards in fascist headquarters!

After the war writers were fully involved in the fight against illiteracy and the struggle over the correct ideological line during the period when the Yugoslav Party was trying to

gain influence in Albania. A Literary Gazette was started at this time; but also in newspapers, periodicals and publications of all kinds space was reserved for literary contributions. With all these tasks there was a great need for more writers and the talents of workers and peasants were tapped on an increasing scale to bring new faces and fresh ideas into the circle of practising writers.

Naturally the ideological conflicts which have arisen within the communist world have been reflected in contemporary Albanian literature. In 1956 at the time of the so-called 'thaw' in Soviet arts and letters, which was really a recrudescence of bourgeois ideology, the Albanian literary review, Nendori (November), printed an article attacking the idea that man should be viewed as a member of a class rather than as an individual whose opinions and sentiments were worthy of consideration simply because they were uniquely his. Such incorrect attitudes from a socialist point of view were strongly criticised at a conference called by the Party in 1957 to discuss literary problems; but the fight against bourgeois and revisionist tendencies has to be never ending.

In his 1966 Report Enver Hoxha took artists and writers to task for insufficient vigilance in this respect. After recognising the good work they had done, he added: 'It should be said, however, that the artistic and cultural institutions, the Writer's Union, the State Publishing House and the literary press, the Party organisations of those institutions and the leading cadres in those sectors are not striving with adequate persistence to carry out the revolutionising of culture, do not show the necessary ideological vigilance and continue to tolerate things in an unpardonable way, thus falling into liberal errors . . . Foreign plays and operas including works irreconcilable with our ideology still occupy too large a place in the repertory of theatres, books by doubtful authors are published and we translate bourgeois works en bloc as if we could not do without them.'

This was not national chauvinism. Great writers like Shakespeare are studied in Albanian schools; but Enver Hoxha reminded his audience that even in the greatest writers and poets of Europe 'we will not find all that we are after . . . since these writers too reflect, if not directly, at

least in one way or another, the bourgeois ideas that prevailed at the period in which they lived.' And certainly the works of foreign literature could not be taken as models for Albanian authors in creating a socialist literature which was at once revolutionary and national in spirit. 'Literature and art must reflect the struggle, work and life of our own working people, their ideals and aspirations, their noble feelings, their heroic character, their modesty and grandeur and their revolutionary upsurge. The Party demands that literature and art truly reflect life in its revolutionary development and focus attention on the heroes of our time – workers, peasants, soldiers and revolutionary cadres, men of a new type, who are working and fighting selflessly in building socialism.'

In order to be able to portray this new man writers spend considerable time with the people of village and factory, working and living among them and learning not only to write authentically *about* them but to write in such a way that their works are accessible *to* them. Indeed one author, Dhimiter Xhuvani, whose novel *The Tunnel* aroused a good deal of discussion about whether he had accurately described the people of the village where his book was set, went to live among them to check his impressions and eventually made that village his own. New novels, like new operas and new dramatic works, tend to become the subjects of a wide-ranging debate about their merits and defects in which everyone takes part. Those in particular whose sphere of activity may be touched on in the work consider it collectively and report their conclusions. This is very helpful to the author's further development as a writer concerned with the masses and not simply expressing his own inner life in a highly individualistic style intended to win the praise of literary critics as alienated from the people as he would then have become himself. Criticism and self-criticism which characterise the relations of the author with his readers and with his fellow workers in the Writers' Union prevent him from having an exaggerated opinion of himself and thinking of literary creation as an extension of his own ego rather than as the form in which he serves the working people.

In their efforts to revolutionise their own creative work

writers always have the guidance of the Albanian Party of Labour which demands that art and literature must play their full part in consolidating and advancing socialism. The bourgeoisie and the revisionists claim that the concern of Marxist-Leninist parties for the ideological purity of literature imposes a line on writers which smothers creative thought and work. But this question, like any other, has to be seen from a class perspective. Creative for whom? For individuals who have detached themselves from the masses and by their selfish pursuit of their own subjective interests consciously or unconsciously collaborate with the class enemies of the masses, or creative for the great working people who alone are capable of changing society and changing themselves in the process? It is precisely like questions of freedom or democracy. Freedom and democracy for whom? For the exploiters and their hireling scribblers who serve the interests of their masters by ascribing the vileness of the capitalist system to the plight of man as such and by trying to distract people's attention from the great issues of class struggle or freedom and democracy for the working masses and those artists and writers who serve them.

All Albania's professional authors are in the Writers' Union; but it is by no means an exclusive body and is continuously recruiting new members from the ranks of workers and from new generations of revolutionary intellectuals who are themselves of and with the working class. Writers in the Union may have tasks assigned to them – articles on specific subjects for magazines or newspapers, a libretto for a new opera, reportage on some major development. If a writer has a project of his own for a play or a novel, a collection of poems or short stories, he puts his proposal to the praesidium of the Writers Union. If agreed, he is given the time he needs while still being paid at the usual rate of some 800 to 1000 leks a month – comparable to the wage of a skilled mechanic or specialist in a factory. When his work is completed, it will be discussed with his colleagues from the point of view of helping him improve it, correct any errors of detail or mistaken ideological implications. Authors are paid for their works according to fixed rates but they receive no royalties.

There has been a remarkable flourishing of literature in socialist Albania crowning with laurel all the other brilliant achievements and encouraging the people to greater efforts yet in building their new society. Socialist realism has not become a cut-and-dried formula for churning out worthy but dull books about stereotyped characters in the hands of such gifted writers as Dhimiter Shuteriqi, President of the Writers' Union, Shefqet Musaraj, Lazer Siliqi, Dhimiter Xhuvani, Petro Marko, Jakov Xoxe, Qamil Buxheli, Ismail Kadare, Vito Koçi, Alqi Kristo, Sterjo Spasse and so many others. Far from being a stale and rigid form socialist realism in their books, which cover a wide range of literary styles – documentary, romantic, satiric, humorous, dramatic and epic, sparkles and sizzles in perpetual development through the struggle of opposites, through the struggle of classes, through the struggle of the new with the old. These writers, grounded in Marxism-Leninism, take as their subject matter the lives of the Albanian working masses and light them up in an inspiring, instructive and entertaining way with their thorough understanding of contradictions. Rooted in reality they also give their works a tremendous lift with that indispensable feature of genuine socialist realism – revolutionary romanticism.

To get some idea of the wealth of Albanian literature, take the year 1970 alone in every month of which some two or three important new novels became available to the reading public in the many bookshops or through the twenty-nine large lending libraries. At the beginning of the year there was 'A Difficult Birth' by Eleana Kadare, the first full length novel by a woman, which took as its theme the emancipation of Albanian women.

'Commissar Memo', a lyric evocation of the liberation struggle, was the first novel by the well-known poet, Dritero Agolli.

The third novel by Ismail Kadare, 'The Citadel', used an episode in the long war against the Turks in which the Albanian people were led by the great national patriot Scanderbeg to draw certain parallels with the present-day resistance against revisionism. Kadare, who though still in his thirties has twice won the Literary Prize of the Republic, has

gained a reputation outside Albania by the translation into French and English of his two earlier novels 'The Wedding' which dealt with the clash of the new social ideals and old feudal customs and the ironic 'General of a Dead Army' in which an Italian charged with recovering particulars about all the fascists who died in Albania goes around the country trying to call up from their graves a dead host.

A violent earthquake which interrupted the life of the country in 1967 was the subject of a novel 'Troublous December' by another distinguished poet, Fatos Arapi.

'Standing up Again' by Dhimiter Xhuvani counterpointed a tragedy suffered by one of Albania's new socialist men with the surging life going on around him.

A satiric novel 'The Whole City Laughs' by Qamil Buxheli, held up to scorn those bureaucratic elements who hinder the development of socialism.

Another well-known writer, Jakov Xoxe, brought out a novel 'The White South' about the struggle of peasants in a co-operative farm to narrow the differences between town and countryside.

These are only some of the literary works brought out in one year by the Naim Frashëri State Publishing House. In addition many historical and political works are being produced in ever-increasing numbers like Kristo Frashëri's 'Popular History of Albania', a 'History of Albanian Literature', the well-documented 'History of the Albanian Party of Labour' and the 'Collected Works of Enver Hoxha'.

This definitive collection of the writings of Enver Hoxha is an event of great importance not only to the people of Albania but to revolutionaries all over the world. Their significance is well summed up in the words of the Secretary of the Party Central Committee, Hysni Kapo, on the occasion of Enver Hoxha's sixtieth birthday on October 16, 1968:

'And if we, the Albanian communists and people review today with legitimate pride the road that we have covered for more than a quarter of a century and the victories attained, if we say with unshakable conviction that we have honourably fulfilled our national and international obligations, if we view today with certitude and optimism the future of the Fatherland and the course of socialism in Albania, this is due

exclusively to our Party, to its just Marxist-Leninist line, to its founder and organiser, Comradė Enver Hoxha who, through his wisdom, Marxist-Leninist capability and daring, succeeded not only in organising the Party of the proletariat, not only in working out the proper political and organisational line befitting every stage that our Party has gone through, but also in applying this line in a consistent manner waging a struggle that knew no compromise against all hostile trends within the Party and against all external enemies of every shade and colour, fighting openly or in secret.

'The ideas and works of Comrade Enver Hoxha are a living example of Marxism-Leninism in action, of fidelity to and unwavering defence of the fundamental principles of Marxism-Leninism, of the creative application of these principles to the specific conditions of Albania in the present epoch, of their enrichment with the historical experience of the Party of Labour of Albania and of the Albanian people in the National Liberation War, in revolutionary socialist construction and in the new experience of the international communist movement. The revolutionary experience that figures as our great asset in the balance sheet of the Party of Labour of Albania and that constitutes its contribution to the common treasury of the theory and practice of revolution and socialism is reflected, summed up and elaborated in the most complete, exact and profound manner in the works and teachings of Comrade Enver Hoxha.'

Chapter Twenty One

A Genuinely Free Society

Albania as seen from the West through the haze of the Cold War and, more recently, as a country as remote and incomprehensible as its great fraternal ally, China, is no doubt often thought of as grim and austere, with a people joylessly carrying out the stern dictates of a party that has sacrificed everything to some inhuman conception of ideological purity. It is described by those who have seen the Albanian coast from Corfu as a brooding, mysterious abrupt land with the implication that its inhabitants must also be strange and dour – a race of zealots, perhaps, who have bartered away their individual liberty for the rigidly-ordered collective life of a beehive.

No illusion is dispelled more quickly for those fortunate enough to have visited Albania; and it is hardly Albania's fault if, from the time the Albanians made it clear that they would develop their own country in their own way without outside interference, the hostility of the West has prevented more people from disabusing themselves of such misconceptions by first hand experience. Not only are they a joyful, vigorous independent people who bring tremendous zest to living and building a new society in their beautiful sunny land, there is no country in the world which is freer from restraint.

Partly this freedom from restraint operates at the level of material conditions under socialism by which no one has to be afraid of being out of a job, going hungry, not having a decent house to live in or ever being deprived of the opportunity of contributing whatever he has to offer for the improvement and enrichment of the life of the community.

Partly it operates at the level of morals and social

relationships which are based on popular respect for the decisions the people themselves have arrived at in their various collectives. Discipline there is, but it is a discipline the people impose on themselves. Socialism cannot be exported, neither can it be imposed from above. People can be told how to make a revolution or how to build socialism; but no one can do it for them or in spite of them. A socialist society must always be an inner-directed society. Restraint there is, but it is the self-restraint that comes from the constant practice of criticism and self-criticism in every social or productive organisation. The freedom of Albanian society is firmly rooted in the real democracy of the mass line.

An example of the mass line in action at the ideological level is provided by the way the question of religion has been dealt with in Albania. Before the war there were three main religions. The majority of the people, some 65% of the population, as a result of 500 years of Turkish domination, were Mohammedans. The influence of Roman Catholicism was strongest in the north and in the south the Greek Orthodox Church claimed many adherents. As has already been pointed out, during the liberation struggle many leading religious figures discredited themselves with the people by collaborating with the Italian or German invaders; but the hold of superstition remained strong, particularly in the rural areas. The transition from a mainly feudal society to socialism was so quick that the mosques and churches hardly had time to dress their practices and doctrines in more sophisticated forms that might have had some appeal to a more enlightened public. Their hold was of a nature to impede social advance and their reactionary views on the family, on the privileges of property and on the spiritual role of mullahs and priests in ordering the lives of the people, soon came into conflict with the movement for the emancipation of women, with the expropriation of landlords and with scientific progress in the medical and social services.

The Party carried out an intensive ideological struggle against these backward manifestations which was taken up by all the mass organisations in the Democratic Front. But there was no order from the state closing down mosques and churches nor restricting religious rites and observances. Ań

important part in this battle of ideas was played by Party cadres who by the example of their devotion to popular welfare did more than arguments could to vindicate Marxism-Leninism as a philosophy at the service of the masses and to demonstrate the superiority of science over superstitious faith.

Gradually, first in the cities and then in the countryside, the grip of the holy men was weakened. The mosques and churches became emptier and emptier. Eventually the people in this community or that realised that they had a large building in their midst which no longer had any function. Young people particularly took the initiative in proposing a social use for these structures and, after meeting to deal with any objections which might still remain, the work would begin on a voluntary basis of converting the buildings into cultural centres, theatres, concert halls or storage depots. Those religious houses of great architectural beauty or historical interest have been preserved as part of the people's traditional heritage – like the delightful mosque with its graceful minaret in the very centre of Tirana around which some of the fiercest fighting in the liberation of the capital took place. A large mosque on a rocky slope rising above Durrës has been turned into a magnificent youth centre with views of the blue Adriatic through the arches in the white walls of the high promenade. The great cathedral at Shkodra has become a fine gymnasium with a huge indoor swimming pool, basket ball courts, boxing rings and well-equipped departments for every branch of sport.

The ideological struggle against superstitious attitudes and anti-social customs still goes on in spite of the successes already achieved on the popular front of creating a genuinely socialist way of life. It is waged by the people themselves in their study groups which are a characteristic feature of every factory, farm, school or cultural organisation – each with its own library of essential books and periodicals. The understanding of social customs, analysing their positive and negative aspects, rejecting what is bad and keeping what is good, depends on exposing their class origin and appreciating the roots of backward and reactionary habits in the philosophical, idealistic and religious ideology of feudalism and

capitalism. But even when the economic basis of these harmful and stultifying customs has been totally changed the customs themselves may persist unless they are attacked directly and replaced with socialist habits.

In the countries where revisionism has reversed the progress toward socialism, even before the restoration of capitalism and bourgeois morality had reached its present extent, there was already a tendency to vacillate on the question of religion between a tough atheistic line from above and a liberal policy based on expediency. The adherence to the mass line in Albania has avoided these two complementary errors.

The absence of external restraint appears in a number of superficial social phenomena which even the casual visitor may observe: the freedom everyone enjoys of listening to whatever radio programmes he likes, though Radio Tirana provides an excellent domestic service with particularly good news coverage; the fact that one sees hardly any policemen at all except for those directing traffic at busy intersections; the lack of any reticence in the subjects people are prepared to talk about with utter frankness in the most public places. And yet the streets are as clean, socialist property as secure, informal conversations as politically sound, tastes in the arts and in entertainments as judiciously selective as if the people were under constant surveillance. Because, of course, they *are* under constant surveillance – provided by themselves. The pressure of an enlightened public opinion educated in the socialist ethic of putting collective interest above self-interest is very strong; but it cannot appear as outside pressure to those, the whole working people, who enter actively into its formation and further development. Under the conditions of proletarian democracy the kinds of offences which keep the police busy in capitalist countries are not only declining rapidly but are increasingly dealt with in the various collectives without recourse to state coercion, just as more and more legal cases are settled in the same way out of court.

But of course proletarian democracy has another face which is turned toward the class enemies of workers, toward those who would revive bourgeois ways of thinking and feeling as a prelude to diverting the country from its socialist

course and restoring capitalism. That is the face of the dictatorship of the proletariat. There is no liberalism for these hostile elements who would mislead workers through bourgeois influences in culture and education or try to corrupt them by replacing socialist incentives with material incentives. The guardian Party and the socialist leadership have not hesitated in the past and will not hesitate in the future to unmask such enemies at an early stage and mobilise the working masses against them.

Nor is there any softness in Albania's readiness to defend the independence which has cost the lives of so many heroes and heroines and entailed such sacrifices on the part of the people generally. Not only are the armed services, which are also an example of proletarian democracy with their absence of ranks and status symbols, in a constant state of preparedness; but all young people take their turn at military service and training. There could be no better proof of the stability of Albanian society and the correct relationship of mutual trust between state and people than the fact that all citizens possess weapons and know how to use them. The working class in Albania is an armed proletariat; and the defence of socialism within and of national sovereignty without rests ultimately on the tested fighting qualities of workers who still, and for many years to come, will have to build socialism with pickaxe in one hand and rifle in the other.

At the beginning of November, 1971, the Sixth Congress of the Party of Labour of Albania was convened at Tirana, five years after the Fifth Congress in 1966 at which Enver Hoxha in the Party's name had called for a great effort in further revolutionising the whole life of the country.

This Sixth Congress was an historic socialist occasion, marking the successful completion of the Fourth Five Year Plan half a year ahead of schedule, the launching of the Fifth Five Year Plan and the 30th Anniversary of the Party which had been founded there in the capital city back in the dark days of the fascist occupation. The Report of the Central Committee submitted by Enver Hoxha analysed the world situation drawing attention to the growing revolutionary strength of the working masses, recorded the economic and social achievements of the past five years and looked forward

confidently to tackling the new tasks agreed for the future in consultation with the people themselves. The admission of China to its rightful place in the United Nations, for which the Albanians had fought so long, was a diplomatic victory the Congress noted with appreciation.

This Congress afforded one the opportunity of noting the profound contrast between the satisfaction of the Albanian people in what they had already accomplished in developing their own resources in their own collective interest and their confidence in the future and the plight of workers in the capitalist countries with their economic stagnation, financial crises, rampant inflation and mass unemployment. As delegate after delegate came forward to the rostrum of the auditorium in the magnificent Palace of Culture to contribute to the discussion on the Report one was aware of how deep socialist ideas and attitudes have penetrated the consciousness of the people in this Marxist-Leninist land. Brigade leaders from remote upland co-operatives, tractor drivers and engineers, men and women workers from factories and industrial combines, representatives of the youth and womens organisations, Party cadres, technicians, University lecturers, writers and artists – all, in presenting their accounts of goals achieved in their various fields, shortcomings yet to be overcome and dedication to further socialist advances in a revolutionary spirit, demonstrated the great changes that have been wrought in Albanian society and the extent to which the people have changed themselves in the process.

A detailed report on the achievements of the Fourth Five Year Plan and the targets accepted for the Fifth was presented by Mehmet Shehu. Overall industrial and agricultural production in the five year period had gone up by 61%, industrial production by 83%, or some 30% higher than planned, while agricultural production rose by a substantial 28% which was not as high as the estimated increase but included a spectacular growth in the production of food grains and live stock essential to self-sufficiency in food. The Fifth Five Year Plan (1971-1975) proposes an increase in industrial production of 66% at an annual rate of 10.3%. Means of production, the heavy industrial base of the

economy, are to be increased by 78-83% and consumer goods industries by 40-44% representing a voluntary saving on the part of the people to ensure continued socialist growth for the benefit of future generations.

Mehmet Shehu concluded his report with an acknowledgement of what economic advance was all about. 'We must always hold high the banner of class struggle in the field of production and distribution. Our country's socialist development is a process of complex and continuous struggle waged by the working masses under the leadership of the Party. The struggle for the socialist construction of our country is a complicated class struggle, its subject and its object is man, with his views, convictions, morality and consciousness, with his interests and relationships both as an individual and as a member of society.'

At the conclusion of the week-long Congress, after the elections to the Central Committee, the Political Bureau and the Control Commission, a mass rally of over 100,000 people in the great square before the Palace of Culture, with the huge equestrian statue of Scanderbeg at one end, heard a summary of the proceedings of the Congress from their beloved leader, Enver Hoxha. Repeated cheers and chanted slogans filled the air with a mighty roar as dusk gathered and the coloured lights on the public buildings blazed brightly. As darkness fell groups in traditional costumes danced in the streets and thousands of voices were raised in familiar partisan songs while overhead a brilliant display of fireworks lit the capital city festively. The story of the Albanian people goes on but we can fittingly take our leave of them in this celebratory mood.

It is a pleasure for a writer, having some knowledge of Albania which he hopes to deepen, to have told, however inadequately, this story of her people, their Party of Labour and their great Marxist-Leninist leader, Enver Hoxha, because it is a story, after so much heroic struggle and so much hard creative work, which has come out happy in the end – or, the modest Albanian people themselves would insist, in the middle. They see themselves as having taken only the first correct steps along the road to communism. We can say on their behalf that their courage, often during their history in

the face of tremendous odds, and their steadfast dedication to the ideals of socialism have fully deserved the quality of life enjoyed in Albania today.

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